

THE JUST, PARTICIPATORY AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT IN
ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

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the Faculty of the School of Theology
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Doctor of Philosophy

by
Joseph A. Keys, Jr.
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Joseph A. Keys, Jr.

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Joseph A. Keys, Jr.

*under the direction of _____ Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee

Joseph C. Haugh
Chairman
John B. Cobb, Jr.
[Signature]

Date April 2, 1982

Joseph C. Haugh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose and Problem	6
Limitations and Sources	7
Theoretical Framework	15
Related Literature	16
Method	18
PART I	
BACKGROUND AND BASIC APPROACHES	
INTRODUCTION	23
1 Early Years	24
Stockholm 1925	25
Jerusalem 1928	30
Jerusalem to Oxford	34
Oxford 1937	35
Tambaram 1938	38
Summary	39
2 The Approach of the World Council of Churches to Social Issues: 1948-1975 . . .	45
Chronological Overview	46
Structure	46
Church and Society Methods	55
Issues	59
Ecumenical Social Ethics	65
Summary	69
PART II	
JUSTICE, PARTICIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION 1925-1974	
INTRODUCTION	72
3 Justice	75
The Early Years 1925-1948	76
The World Council	86
The Futurum Inquiry	100
Summary	119

Chapter	Page
4 Participation	128
The Early Years 1925-1948	129
The W.C.C. 1948-1968	136
The Futurum	145
Nairobi 1975	155
Summary	156
5 Sustainability	168
The Early Years 1925-1948	171
The World Council 1948-1975	173
The Futurum Study	179
Summary	201
PART III	
THE CONCEPT OF A JUST, PARTICIPATORY AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY	
INTRODUCTION	211
6 Development and Articulation of the Concept	213
Preliminary Development	213
Tensions Emerge	220
Struggles for Definition	228
Jamaica '79: Controversy Not Consensus	253
MIT '79: The Debate Continued	257
Summary	265
7 Conclusions	272
Problem Areas	272
Positive Accomplishments	278
An Affirmation and Suggestions for Further Development	282
APPENDIX	
A Futurum Prospectus	322
B Statements on Social Issues 1925-1938	325
C Trends in Assembly Themes	331
D Excerpts from W.C.C. Week of Meetings	336
E Outline of Issues From the Consultation on Humanity, Nature and God	339
F Report From JPSS Drafting Group	341
G List of Participants at the First Meeting of the JPSS Advisory Committee	347
H Discussion Group on Programme Areas of Concentration With Special Reference to JPSS	348

	Page
SYSTEMATIC BIBLIOGRAPHY	352
A. Pre-World Council of Churches Meetings (1925-1949)	352
B. World Council of Churches (1948-1980)	
1. Assembly Documents	354
2. Church and Society Documents 1948-1975	355
3. JPSS Materials 1976-1980	357
C. Additional Sources	
1. Books	360
2. Periodicals	361
3. Documents	361

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Chronological Summary of Assemblies and Major Church and Society Study Themes and Conferences	47
2	Summary of Issues 1948-1975	61
3	Positive and Negative Factors Which May Effect the Quality of Decisions, Even in Light of Increased Participation	166
4	Interpretations of Technology and Its Relation to Nature	204
5	Outline of the Proposed Church and Society Program 1976-1981	218
6	Major Dimensions of Two Approaches to the JPSS Emphasis	230
7	Outline of Report of the Advisory Committee on the Search for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society	256
8	Emphases Which Emerged in the Church and Society and Advisory Committee Discussions on JPSS 1976-1980	269

ABSTRACT

The concept of the Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society, (JPSS), a program emphasis of the World Council of Churches from 1976 through 1980, represented the combination of concerns related to human poverty and oppression with those centered on the disruption and destruction of non-human creation. This study addresses the problem: Is the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society a viable compound principle which can guide and inform the evaluation of present situations, responses to those situations and the search for alternatives for the future?

The development of the concepts of JUSTICE, PARTICIPATION and SUSTAINABILITY in ecumenical discussions is traced from the 1925 Stockholm Conference through the 1980 JPSS discussions within the World Council of Churches. Beginning with the establishment of the World Council in 1948 attention is focused on programs conducted by and related to the sub-unit on Church and Society since the JPSS concept emerged in 1974 from its endeavor. Definitions of the three constituent elements which have emerged over the years are analyzed in terms of their relationship to organizational structure, issues addressed, methods of exploration, theological rationale and ethical methodologies cited in the material. Special consideration is given to

the types of relationships posited between the constituent terms following the articulation of the JPSS concept in 1976. Much of the material underlying the analysis of the latter period covered in the study was obtained from the World Council of Churches Archives in Geneva. A systematized bibliography is appended which organizes the material chronologically in conjunction with its related study theme, conference, or assembly.

The three constituent concepts represent concerns which have, in varying degrees, characterized ecumenical dialogue from early in the twentieth century. Theological and ethical bases cited in the materials considered have maintained that each is essential for creative and continued existence on this planet. The study concludes that justice, participation and sustainability should be related to form a compound principle which can guide Christian thought and action on social issues.

ACRONYMS

BAT	British American Tobacco Company
CCIA	Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
CCPD	Commission of the Churches Participation in International Development
CICARWS	Committee on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service
DFI	Dialogue with Living Faiths and Ideologies
EDCS	Ecumenical Documents on Church and Society
IMC	International Missionary Council
JPSS	Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society
PCR	Program to Combat Racism
WCC	World Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

Dramatic discrepancies in wealth and power have existed within the human community throughout recorded history. During the twentieth century, however, dimensions of this disparity began to be emphasized which gave new and added understanding to the scope and implications of widespread poverty and hunger.

Revolutions in travel and communications led to an increased awareness of the nature and extent of poverty and hunger in many parts of the world. Studies in economics, political science and sociology began to demonstrate that in many instances the conditions of poverty and hunger, if not created by programs and policies conducted by various constructs of power and affluence within the global community, were often sustained and perpetuated by them.¹ Thus two relatively new concepts emerged. One was the concept of a global village or community growing out of the increased knowledge of each other and made possible through travel and communication, and often based on various forms of economic and political interaction. The second concept dealt with the expanded understanding of oppression on a global scale in relation to hunger and poverty.

¹E.g. Charles Elliot, Patterns of Poverty in the Third World (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 416.

On the threshold of the closing quarter of the twentieth century it could be asserted that "the services of a statistician are not required to establish that the majority of mankind is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, undereducated, and prey to preventable diseases."² It became increasingly apparent that a majority of the affluent could be found in the Northern hemisphere, while, to a large extent, the poor are located in the tropics and the South:³

The North including Eastern Europe has a quarter of the world's population and four-fifths of its income; the South including China has three billion people--three-quarters of the world's population and one-fifth of the world's income.

To the factors of affluence, poverty, hunger and oppression must be added the dynamics of technological growth and change. Technologies have made a broad range of contributions to the improvement of the quality of human life. But it has become increasingly apparent that the fire which cooks and warms can also maim and destroy. Developments in chemical, biological and nuclear warfare threaten the future of life on this planet. Serious questions related to even the peaceful use of nuclear power remain without satisfactory answers. Environmental disruption and

²Elliot, p. 1.

³Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, Willy Brandt, North-South: A Programme for Survival (London: Pan Books, 1980), p. 32.

destruction have resulted from the direct and indirect impact of a wide range of technologies originally viewed as benign.

Concern with the impact and control of technology has taken a variety of forms in recent years ranging from the fears expressed in the early sixties about the occurrence of a Silent Spring, to the growing questions raised in the seventies about the application of genetic engineering.⁴ Many have recognized the negative impact of modern affluence and technology on social and cultural life.⁵

In short, humanity faces a constellation of factors which can not be ignored. On the one hand, technologies have given humanity the power to destroy the earth as we know it through cataclysm or systematic disruption and pollution. On the other hand, a number of problems such as hunger, poverty and oppression although certainly not new, now effect such a large proportion of the human community that the total fabric of human organization may be rent. The North-South Commission summarized the situation by stating that even if massive and totally destructive war is avoided "an equal danger might be chaos--as a result of mass

⁴Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 368; Paul Berg, et al., "Potential Bio-hazards of Recombinant DNA Molecules," Science, V, 4148 (July 1974)

⁵See Chapters 5 and 6 following.

hunger, economic disaster, environmental catastrophies and terrorism."⁶ In light of these conditions a member of the Commission observed:⁷

The new generations of the world need not only economic solutions, they need ideas to inspire them, hopes to encourage them, and first steps to implement them. They need a belief in man, in human dignity, in basic human rights; a belief in the values of justice, freedom, peace, mutual respect, in love and generosity, in reason rather than force.

This stood as an affirmation of the need for systems of belief which nurture creative values and hope within the human community. Technical solutions in and of themselves are insufficient to meet human need and provide the dynamic necessary for a creative future.

One of the functions of religious systems is to provide focus, meaning, purpose, value and direction for living. Over the centuries Christian social ethics, in a variety of forms and expressions, has sought to relate Christian understandings of humanity, nature and God to everyday problems and future possibilities.

Early in this century a number of Christian communities began to express their concern to demonstrate the unity which they share in Christ. These efforts evolved

⁶Brandt, p. 13.

⁷Brandt, p. 12.

into what has generally been known as the ecumenical movement. Prior to the formal establishment of the World Council of Churches⁸ in 1948 two of the major segments of the ecumenical movement which addressed social issues directly were the Universal Christian Council on Life and Work and the International Missionary Council. These did much to shape the understanding of, and the approach to, social issues which have become characteristic of the ecumenical movement up to the present time.

The Life and Work movement was characterized from its beginning by the firm belief that the gospel was not limited to questions of individual salvation and personal piety. The gospel was understood to speak to social and international problems, and the church was given the responsibility of making an effective witness in these areas. Delegates to the 1925 Stockholm Conference "accepted the urgent duty of applying His Gospel in all realms of life-- industrial, social, political and international."⁹

This concern to facilitate an effective Christian witness in response to pressing social, political and economic issues was clearly reflected in the formation of the

⁸The World Council of Churches was the product of the union of the Faith and Order, and Life and Work Movements.

⁹Stockholm (1925), p. 711.

World Council of Churches.¹⁰ Exploration of these concerns provided the major focus for the Department of Church and Society. A broad range of issues was addressed over the years. Two recurring themes were the causes of the suffering of the poor and oppressed; and, problems arising from the growth of science and technology.

Purpose and Problem

Efforts to express a Christian understanding of and response to poverty and oppression and the destruction of the biosphere led to the emergence of the concept of the just and sustainable society at a 1974 Church and Society conference. Born out of the combined endeavor of the ecumenical church, the concept of a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society (JPSS) represented a Christian address to the issues of life and death facing a majority of humanity, united with issues concerning a creative relationship with non-human creation.¹¹

From the moment of its articulation the concept of sustainability was attacked from a variety of perspectives.¹² The linking of justice with sustainability has been strongly

¹⁰See Chapter 2.

¹¹Chapters 5 and 6 detail the emergence of the JPSS concept.

¹²See Chapters 5 and 6.

resisted by some. The JPSS concept has both been acclaimed and been derided as a utopian vision.¹³

The present study traces the development of the concept of the just, participatory and sustainable society in ecumenical thought. The problem under consideration is centered on the potential inherent in the JPSS concept and is stated in the question: Is the concept of the Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society a valid compound principle which can guide and inform the evaluation of existing situations, responses to those situations, and the search for creative alternatives for the future?

Limitations and Sources

The ecumenical movement has incorporated a wide diversity of interests. As indicated above, the present study is generally concerned with dimensions of ecumenical activity which addressed social issues. Particular interest is focused on the sub-unit on Church and Society due to its key involvement in the emergence and development of the JPSS concept.

The concern with social issues expressed within the ecumenical movement between 1925 and 1948, a period referred to in this study as the "early years," led to the identification of issues and methods which were strongly evidenced

¹³See Ans van der Bent, God So Loves the World (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1977), pp. 88-96.

in subsequent World Council activity. In order to provide background information and a more comprehensive survey of conceptual development, the present study gives some attention to the major conferences held during those early years.

A second historical period extends from the formal establishment of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948 to its Fifth Assembly at Nairobi in 1975 where the concept of a just and sustainable society had its debut. During this period, a growing number of World Council departments, commissions and units have given attention to social issues and concerns related to justice and participation. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) was established in 1946 as a joint commission of the World Council and the International Missionary Council. In the course of its activities the CCIA has directed attention to such issues as war and peace, international law, United Nations relations and operations, the arms race and disarmament, economic development and aid to economically disadvantaged nations. Many of these concerns appeared as natural extensions of the international scope and focus of the earlier conferences of the IMC.

Concern with racial prejudice and the injustice resulting from it was also voiced early on. As the World Council developed its organizational structure it more clearly orchestrated and focused its concern over the extent and impact of racism and the need to confront it. The

Secretariat of Racial and Ethnic relations was originally related to the Department of Church and Society and conducted a number of studies on the nature of racism and its elimination. From this evolved the current Program to Combat Racism (PCR).

In recent years the Churches' Commission on Participation in Development (CCPD) has been actively involved in issues related to the rights and needs of developing nations and peoples. Due to the fact that the CCIA, the PCR, and the CCPD have dealt with many dimensions of pressing social, political, and economic concerns addressed by the World Council their activities in these areas must be acknowledged, although, as noted, the present study is concerned primarily with the activities of the sub-unit on Church and Society.

From 1948 to 1975 the World Council and the sub-unit on Church and Society produced, or assisted in the production of, thousands of pages of material on social issues. Although many individuals and small groups within the ecumenical movement have written and spoken about the concepts under consideration, the present study focuses attention on thought formed in the crucible of ecumenical dialogue and affirmed by the ecumenical process. Inspired individual commentary exists, but the present search is concerned to identify "ecumenical thought" on justice, participation and sustainability.

The Assembly has, from the beginning of the World Council, functioned as its supreme legislative body.¹⁴ Thus, those section reports adopted by the Assemblies, that reflect influence of the work of Church and Society are also discussed.

As we have seen the World Council of Churches was preceded by many years of intense ecumenical endeavor. Thus it had a number of precedents upon which to draw as it prepared for and engaged in its early work. The assemblies at Amsterdam (1948) and Evanston (1954) followed the patterns of the earlier ecumenical conferences. A central theme was chosen and lengthy documents prepared in advance to help focus the thinking of the participants.¹⁵ From New Delhi (1961) forward each assembly continued to have a designated theme, but that theme did not predominate as in earlier assemblies. This change was reflected not only in the assembly reports, but also in fact that no major study volume addressing the theme was produced in preparation for New Delhi or subsequent assemblies. This was undoubtedly attributable to the fact that by that time the World Council had established its own ongoing program, the nature and

¹⁴Work Book 5th Assembly (1975), pp. 114-15.

¹⁵See Man's Disorder and God's Design, Amsterdam (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948); and, The Christian Hope and the Task of the Church, Evanston (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954)

substance of which was shared with the assembly delegates in the Work Book and the report published by the Central Committee covering the period between assemblies. Both of these became standard preparatory documents for assemblies, and both serve as sources for this study.

In addition to structuring its own statement on social issues each assembly prior to Nairobi (1975) received a report from the committee on Church and Society or the Division of which it was a part which outlined its future activities. At Nairobi this format was changed to the holding of hearings on each of the Program Units to provide opportunity for discussion of future activities by a larger portion of the constituency.

Between assemblies the Central Committee was charged with the responsibility of implementing the decisions of the assembly and exercising its functions when the assembly was not in session. At Nairobi the direct supervision of programming was transferred to the Central Committee. Thus the minutes of the Central Committee and its executive committee provide a valuable source of information.

The publication of periodicals, monographs, collections of essays, and conference reports was a method used by the Department on Church and Society from its inception to popularize the product of its efforts. Background Information was an occasional periodical published by the department from 1951 through 1968. In 1970, Church and

Society began publication of the Anticipation series in conjunction with the study on the Future of Man and Society in a World of Science-based Technology (hereafter referred to as the Futurum study).

The Futurum study was conducted from 1969 to 1975. The initial program was outlined by the working committee of the Department of Church and Society at its meeting in July, 1969, and approved by the Central Committee the following month.¹⁶ The study was motivated by the exponential growth of science and technology and the implications of that growth for personal and corporate decision-making in social, political and economic spheres of life among all peoples.¹⁷ In its statement of approval for the study the Central Committee indicated that "such an inquiry must seek to determine how the potentiality of modern technology can be employed to overcome rather than accentuate economic and social differences between classes, peoples and nations."¹⁸

The Futurum study will be considered in some detail in the chapters dealing with the development of the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability due to the fact

¹⁶Appendix A contains the categories of concerns listed in the Prospectus from which, it was indicated, the specific areas to be explored would be chosen in the course of the study. Futurum Prospectus.

¹⁷Futurum Prospectus, p. 3.

¹⁸Futurum Prospectus, p. 1.

that it was from the summary conference of that study that the concept of sustainability emerged which led directly to the formation of the JPSS concept. As indicated above, attention in the present study will be focused on the reports from conferences and consultations conducted by Church and Society in conjunction with this and its other major study themes.¹⁹

The third period to be considered extends from 1975 to 1980. During these years the JPSS concept was articulated and adopted as a major program emphasis for the World Council. In addition to Church and Society reports and Central and Executive Committee minutes, documents which were made available from the World Council archives in Geneva have been invaluable to the completion of this study.

Given these parameters three other constraints require brief attention. In the following chapters little consideration is given to the relationship between general historical events and the discussions under consideration. Such inquiries, ranging from an exploration of the influence of the site of an assembly on its deliberations to the impact of political and economic events on the choice and pursuit of study themes, could prove interesting and profitable.

¹⁹These themes are outlined in Chapter 2. Tracing the contributions of individuals to ecumenical thought can be an interesting and worthwhile endeavor, but it is not the focus of the present study.

Secondly, some attention must be given to the general meaning of the term "ecumenical movement." The basic trend in scholarship (e.g., Rouse and Neill, Fey, Duff, Gaines, etc.) and within the World Council of Churches itself has been to refer to the World Council of Churches and its antecedents as the ecumenical movement. This understanding informs the use of the term in the present work. In recent years the Roman Catholic Church has been involved in some discussions giving them a more truly ecumenical character. At the World Conference on Church and Society held in Geneva in 1966 the process of direct contact between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council in the area of joint concern about the justice and social issues began. This overture led to the jointly sponsored conference on development at Beirut in 1968 and the formation of the Joint Committee on Society, Development and Peace. The relationship of the Department of Church and Society to this significant expansion of ecumenical dialogue demanded mention although fuller treatment of these developments is beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

Thirdly, the basic scope and intention of this study just be clarified. Three primary concerns guide the present inquiry: (1) to trace the emergence and development of the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability in ecumenical dialogue; (2) to analyze the nature and substance of the JPSS discussions within the World Council of Churches;

and, (3) to assess the viability of the JPSS principle as a guide for Christian social action.

This study does not include attempts to resolve differences in classical and contemporary theories of justice, participation and sustainability. Nor does it offer any final formulations of the JPSS or its constituent terms. Suggestions are made, however, concerning some dimensions of justice, participation and sustainability, and their relation to and interaction with each other which could guide the understanding and application of the principle of a just, participatory and sustainable society.

Theoretical Framework

The conduct of this study is guided by the assumption that a dynamic relationship exists between certain factors and the definition and application of a concept. These factors include: the issues selected as important; the methods used to analyze those issues; theological perspective; and, ethical basis and methodology.

The JPSS concept is a construct, a compound principle. What is believed about the constituent terms will condition the understanding of the aggregate principle. Thus no preliminary definition of the component terms, justice, participation, and sustainability is offered. A major task of the present undertaking is to explore the meanings of these terms which have emerged over the years

in the ecumenical dialogues under consideration.

No commonly accepted term has yet emerged to describe collectively the nations and people of a majority of Asia, Africa and Latin America who share varying degrees of poverty, disease, and economic and political exploitation and oppression. Over the years a variety of terms has appeared in the literature under consideration here: under developed, less developed, non-industrialized, poor, South, and Third World. In the following chapters the term applied within a report is that which is used. In cases when the present author could exercise his own discretion the term Third World has been employed.

Related Literature

In assessing work already done in relation to the present topic the well-known two volume history of the ecumenical movement²⁰ and Gaines' comprehensive study of the World Council through 1961²¹ provide general historical background. Edward Duff's pioneering work on ecumenical social thought provided the first analysis of the ethical

²⁰Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill (eds.) A History of the Ecumenical Movement (1517-1948) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954); Harold Fey (ed.) A History of the Ecumenical Movement (1948-1960) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970)

²¹David P. Gaines, The World Council of Churches (Peterborough, NH: Smith, 1966)

reflection and its application to social issues going on in World Council discussions.²² Reference is made to relevant dimensions of his work in following chapters.

The collection of articles published in response to the 1966 World Conference on Church and Society and the 1968 Uppsala assembly reflects a variety of perspectives on ecumenical discussions on ethics.²³ In particular, those relating to justice and participation have informed the present study. Paul Bock's work summarizing the ecumenical discussion of social issues through 1970 provides both historical perspective and insight into the problems related to the articulation of an ecumenical ethic.²⁴

Due to the recent articulation of the concept forming the central focus of the present study little systematic reflection has thus far appeared. Martti Lindqvist's dissertation on Economic Growth and the Quality of Life presented analysis of the use and role of those concepts in World Council discussions between 1966 and 1974.²⁵ That study focused on the development of

²²Edward Duff, The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches (New York: Association Press, 1956).

²³R. H. Preston (ed.) Technology and Social Justice (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971).

²⁴Paul Bock, In Search of a Responsible World Society (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

²⁵Martti Lindqvist, Economic Growth and the Quality of Life (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics, 1975).

theoretical models in relation to economic growth and the quality of life, and the influence of international discussion and theological debates in shaping those models. From the point of view of the present study Lindqvist's work is of interest in terms of the analysis of ethical methodology up to 1974 and the brief treatment given to the concept of sustainability which emerged in that year. Collections of documents published by the World Council of Churches have provided convenient resources as well.²⁶

Method

A variety of ecumenical materials, as indicated above, have formed the basis of this study. Only the reports of assemblies and formal statements of the Central Committee, however, represent official statements of the World Council of Churches. Even these are in no way binding on the constituent churches. The remaining documents to be discussed reflect other stages in the ecumenical process. In particular, the reports from Church and Society Conferences are neither more nor less than records of events in the ecumenical process. They become a part of the official voice of the World Council only when they are incorporated

²⁶E.g. Ecumenical Documents on Church and Society (1925-1953) (Geneva: WCC, 1954); Documents of the World Council of Churches (Amsterdam: WCC, 1948).

into the two types of official statements mentioned above.

Even during the final period under consideration here, 1975-1980, the reports from conferences represent the work of a varied group of participants. Of those discussing the JPSS only the sub-unit working groups and the Central Committee had ongoing identity. Hence many of the reports and documents under consideration are the product of an ongoing dialogue that involved an ever changing group of participants.

The materials outlined have been analyzed chronologically to identify trends which have emerged in the three basic categories of structure, issues and methods. The problem is explored by applying these categories to the analysis of the development of the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability in ecumenical dialogue prior to and during the JPSS emphasis.

The system of organization used in the bibliography must be described. Although materials of a more general nature are listed and cited in the conventional way, alphabetical organization appeared to be unsatisfactory for the conference reports, World Council documents, and archival materials. This material is arranged chronologically under thematic headings. References cited in footnotes may be located in the bibliography in conjunction with the year and location of the conference or event under consideration. Footnotes will cite the year and location of the meeting

plus any additional information required to differentiate various sources related to that event. This system follows the World Council practice of generally referring to meetings by location and date, and it facilitates the association of materials with the event to which they refer.

The study is organized in three parts.

1. Part One, provides an analysis of the historical background and basic approaches taken to social issues in the segment of the ecumenical movement under consideration. Attention is given to the issues, methods and structures which have shaped the ecumenical discussions of justice, participation and sustainability.

2. The three chapters of Part Two trace the development of the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability respectively. Four basic dimensions are examined in relation to each concept: (a) Did a systematic and coherent development of the concept appear at any time? (b) If no coherent conceptual development occurred, what meanings did emerge? (c) What theological and ethical bases were provided for the concept? (d) What applications of the concept were made?

3. In Part Three Chapter Six discusses the JPSS emphasis within the World Council from 1975 to 1980. It identifies: (a) the role of the emphasis within the World Council; (b) the definition of the component terms; (c) the

relationship posited between the component terms; and, (d) areas of controversy and agreement.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusions drawn from the preceding analysis and explores what may be posited about the JPSS concept on the basis of definitions and theological and ethical rationales which have emerged in ecumenical dialogue.

PART I

BACKGROUND AND BASIC APPROACHES

PART I

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of the JPSS concept and its constituent parts must be informed by knowledge of the historical and conceptual context from which it emerged. Part I explores background information on the origins and structure of the World Council of Churches and its antecedent movements. Attention is also given to the basic approaches which have guided ecumenical discussions of social issues and trends which have emerged over time.

Chapter One provides an analysis of the above concerns for the period 1925 to 1948, the early years. Chapter Two deals with relevant activity within the World Council of Churches from 1948 to 1975.

Chapter 1

THE EARLY YEARS

From its beginnings early in this century the concern about how the Church of Jesus Christ can witness faithfully to pressing social needs has been a major dimension of the modern ecumenical movement.¹ In this chapter attention will be given to three aspects of the basic approach taken to social issues in the ecumenical movement between 1925 and 1948. The first deals with the purposes or tasks which Christian leaders of the period felt could be accomplished through concerted action by the churches. The second aspect concerns the methods employed to accomplish those purposes. The third element is the identification of the types of issues addressed.

Major conferences and related events held during the period will be examined, with attention being given to the three dimensions just outlined. The analysis of the issues addressed will focus upon a consideration of the themes and section titles of the conferences. An understanding of these basic elements in the ecumenical movement's approach to social issues will provide insight into the emergence of the concept of the just, participatory and sustainable society.

¹The general history of the ecumenical movement is well-known and documented and thus it will not be reproduced here. See the Introduction.

STOCKHOLM 1925

The untiring efforts of Archbishop Nathan Soderblom and his colleagues to affirm the unity of the Church and to raise her voice for the cause of peace during and following the First World War were instrumental in bringing about the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work convened at Stockholm in August, 1925.² In addition to the concern for unity and the commitment to peace there was the deeply held conviction that the churches must "unite at once in an effort to apply Christian principles to buring social and international problems."³

The Task Envisaged

In principle the founders of the Life and Work movement felt that social and international problems were in such acute need of a unified Christian witness and response that it was necessary and possible to lay aside doctrinal differences in order to facilitate common Christian action. The committee, meeting at Halsingborg in 1922, affirmed that the "scope of Life and Work should be limited to 'united

²Nils Karlstrom, "Movements for International Friendship and Life and Work 1910-1925," in Rouse and Neill, p. 520.

³Nils Ehrenstron, "Movement for International Friendship and Life and Work 1925-1948," in Rouse and Neill, p. 546.

practical action . . . leaving for the time being our differences in Faith and Order.'"⁴ "Doctrine divides, but service unites" became something of an unofficial motto for the movement.⁵ It did not, however, survive the practical challenge presented by the first day of meetings in Stockholm. Two of the keynote addresses set forth conflicting views about the role of human activity in realizing the Kingdom of God.⁶ Thus it became apparent early-on that while there might be agreement on the need for Christian witness to social, economic and political problems, theological perspective could not be ignored, and it would condition the problems considered and the interpretation of and response to those problems.⁷

The message of the Stockholm Conference clarified what its members may have understood their task to be by affirming that "the mission of the Church is above all to state principles, and to assert the ideal, while leaving to individual consciences, and to communities the duty of applying them with charity, wisdom and courage."⁸ Even at that early stage, those involved in the Life and Work

⁴Ehrenstrom, p. 57.

⁵Karlstrom, p. 540.

⁶Ehrenstrom, p. 547.

⁷Duff, p. 13.

⁸Stockholm (1925), p. 713.

Movement made it clear that they did not speak for or dictate to the church from which they came, colleague churches within the movement or nonparticipating churches.⁹ Rather, they seemed to feel that their interaction might draw the churches closer together, and that their deliberations could awaken and guide corporate and individual Christian conscience.

Methods Adopted

If the Church was to play a responsible role in shaping Christian conscience it was recognized that reliable and detailed study of the issues would be essential. This concern was reflected both in the preparations for the Stockholm Conference and in action taken by it. Drawing upon the extensive work done by the British Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC) and papers produced by national and international sections of the Universal Christian Council reports were prepared on the six main subjects of the conference and distributed to the members at the beginning of the meeting.¹⁰

⁹Ehrenstrom, p. 553.

¹⁰Stockholm (1925), pp. 8-13. These reports must not have been working documents, but were rather to simply provide information since the agenda of the conference was completely filled with speeches delivered by individual presenters addressing the main topics. See the conference program, pp. vii-xvi.

In their prepared remarks to the Conference both Bishop Billing and Pastor Gounelle stressed the importance of careful, accurate, and in-depth study of social problems and the need for an arm of the Church which could undertake that study on its behalf and from its perspectives.¹¹ Their concern was warmly endorsed, and led to the formation of the International Christian Social Institute, the forerunner of the Ecumenical Institute.¹² Although depression economics and the Second World War greatly limited its operation the variety of methods employed by the Institute and its Research Department continue up to the present time to characterize much of the approach to the study of social issues by the ecumenical movement. The following summary is drawn from Ehrenstrom's discussion of the activities of the Research Department during the 1930's:¹³

1. Survey of existing programs within the churches and sharing of results with the churches.
2. Sharing of ideas about and information on social issues through the publication of an occasional bulletin.
3. Liaison with international organizations and efforts to influence international social legislation.

¹¹Stockholm (1925), pp. 172, 193-99.

¹²Ehrnestrom, pp. 556-57.

¹³Ehrenstrom, pp. 579-82.

4. Convening study conferences to consider specific issues, e.g., unemployment. (The product of such conferences would then be reported to the churches in hopes that it would stimulate and guide their action.)

5. Convening study conferences to explore and define more fully the theological bases for social action.

6. Convening study conferences to facilitate dialogue between theologians and lay experts.

7. Facilitating on-going dialogue between Christian thinkers and between churches.

Stockholm was the first ecumenical conference of the period to be composed primarily of official delegates sent by their denominations, rather than simply gathering interested Christian individuals.¹⁴ It would be difficult to over-estimate the significance of this shift in participation for the movement. In effect, it transformed the movement from the project of a few interested and deeply committed individuals to an ongoing program comprised of and speaking to many of the major churches.

Topics Addressed

Attention at Stockholm was directed toward six major themes:¹⁵

¹⁴Ehrenstrom, p. 548.

¹⁵Stockholm (1925), p. 2.

1. The Purpose of God for Humanity and the Duty of the Church.
2. The Church and Economic and Industrial Problems.
3. The Church and Social and Moral Problems.
4. The Church and International Relations.
5. The Church and Christian Education.
6. Methods of Cooperative and Federative Efforts by the Christian Communions.

In considering the issues addressed during the early part of the Life and Work Movement certain dimensions of the events and tenor of the times must be kept in mind.

Detailed treatment of the general history of the period under consideration is beyond the scope of the present project, but factors such as the devastation wrought by the First World War, the expanding impact of the industrial revolution, the precarious global economic situation of the twenties and thirties, the rise of communism in Russia and Nazism in Germany, and the impending threat of a second major war certainly conditioned the analysis and response of those searching for an effective Christian response in such a world. In light of these factors, it was not surprising, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, that the themes outlined at Stockholm would dominate ecumenical discussions during this early period.

JERUSALEM 1928

The International Missionary Council grew out of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference and was constituted at a meeting held at Lake Mohonk, New York, in October, 1921. A wide

range of responsibilities was adopted by the Council to help coordinate the mission emphasis of the Christian faith.¹⁶

Accepted as one of its eight major functions was the responsibility to "help unite the Christian forces of the world in seeking justice in international and interracial relations."¹⁷

Enriched by its intimate involvement with Christians from around the world, the Council evidenced particular concern for the problems faced by persons in the Third World. The first general IMC Conference was held in Jerusalem in 1928.

Issues

The Jerusalem Conference addressed a broad range of issues, several of which paralleled those raised at Stockholm three years earlier. The major themes were:¹⁸

1. The Christian Message in Its Relation to non-Christian Systems of Thought and Life.
2. The Younger and Older Churches.
3. Religious Education.
4. Missions and Rural Problems.
5. Missions and Industrialism.
6. Missions and Race Conflict.
7. International Missionary Cooperation.

¹⁶The functions performed for the mission emphasis by the IMC paralleled in many ways those which the Life and Work Movement sought to provide the denominations.

¹⁷Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council," in Rouse and Neill, p. 367.

¹⁸John R. Mott, "At Edinburgh, Jerusalem and Madras," International Review of Missions, XXVII, 107 (July 1938), p. 307.

The concern for Christians to operate from an informed position was clearly stated at Jerusalem. The Council moved to establish a Bureau of Social and Economic Research which would analyze problems arising from the "contact between more advanced economic civilizations and the peoples of undeveloped countries . . . ," and then utilize that information in a variety of ways to guide missionary organizations and to stimulate further research because "Christian Churches, in all parts of the world, must seek to obtain a fuller knowledge of the social and economic problems which confront them."¹⁹

Particularly in the section dealing with industrialism the delegates struggled with the significance of economic issues. While recognizing their importance, the Conference concluded that "economic interests must be the servant, not the master, of civilization."²⁰

Methods

The Jerusalem Conference pioneered in shaping many of the methods which would characterize ecumenical conferences. A series of national and regional conferences

¹⁹Jerusalem (1928), pp. 15-16.

²⁰Jerusalem (1928), p. 8.

held in different areas of the world guided the setting of the themes for the Conference.²¹

John R. Mott, after describing the efforts to provide informational reports to be distributed to the delegates outlined the procedures followed at Jerusalem:²²

The plan followed in the conduct of the Jerusalem meeting was quite different from that at Edinburgh. The entire membership was divided into groups and most of the time throughout the fifteen days was spent in group thinking and action. Each of the seven major themes was first discussed for at least a full day by the entire meeting. It was then dealt with exhaustively for days by the particular group to which it had been committed. In most cases the group broke up into subsections for dealing more intensively with different aspects of the theme, the work of the subsections being later acted upon by the entire group. After the drafting committee of a given group had finished its work, the report of the group was considered by the entire meeting and after any necessary changes it became the voice of the meeting. The plan thus followed ensured the maximum participation.

²¹Mott, p. 304.

²²Mott, pp. 304-05. Mott is quoted at length here because the origin of this format has been asserted by some to have been developed at the 1937 Oxford Conference. Harold Lungar in his introduction to the 1966 reprinting of the Oxford Report claimed that the conference: "pioneered in patterns of ecumenical study and discussion which have been followed at large part every since: careful advance study and research, thorough discussion in smaller groups, drafting of reports, their discussion in plenary session and subsequent revision, and finally the commending of the reports to the churches for further study and action." Harold Lungar in Foundations of Ecumenical Social Thought, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. xiv-xv. See also: Gaines, pp. 69-70; and, Ehrenstrom, pp. 590-91. Mott's report indicates that the basic method was tested at Jerusalem almost ten years before the Oxford meeting.

This method of operation differed markedly from the format followed at Stockholm, as well. The IMC appeared to have discovered a practical expression for its concern to facilitate dialogue among Christians from around the globe. Following the Conference "world tours of interpretation and stimulation were made by IMC offices in addition to ongoing fact finding and information gathering visits to many parts of the globe by a wide variety of people.²³

JERUSALEM TO OXFORD

From 1928 to 1937 a number of conferences were held which sought to understand and address some of the pressing social concerns of the day. A detailed analysis of these meetings is beyond the scope of the present project. As will be seen in Part II, however, the genesis of certain concepts which became influential in ecumenical discussions of social issues may be traced to these conferences held in the early thirties. The themes chosen also provide one indication of the topics which dominated ecumenical discussions during the period. The four conferences apposite to the present study were:

The Churches and Present-day Economic Problems,
London, 1930.

The Churches and the World Economic Crisis, Basle,
1933.

²³Mott, p. 310.

The Church and the Problem of Social Order, Rengsdorf, 1933.

The Church and the State of Today, Paris, 1934.

OXFORD 1937

The Oxford Conference of 1937 convened by the Life and Work Movement has been widely acclaimed as one of the major landmarks of the ecumenical movement.²⁴ A basic pre-supposition for the conference was the belief that the Christian faith not only could, but also that it must, speak clearly and knowledgeably to the urgent social and political crises pressing upon the world at the brink of war in 1937: ". . . The Oxford Conference took for granted that social and political questions are basically religious questions, and therefore a legitimate and necessary province of theological investigation."²⁵

Those intimately involved with the conference continued to emphasize that one of the major tasks of the ecumenical movement rested in its responsibility to engage the churches in the study of and action on pressing social issues. J. H. Oldham, in his introduction to the Conference Report, assessed the product of the meeting in this way:²⁶

²⁴Gaines, p. 69; Ehrenstrom, p. 591.

²⁵Ehrenstrom, p. 592.

²⁶Oxford, (1937), p. 9.

The major importance of the Oxford Conference may lie less in the value of the conclusions which it reached on the subjects with which it dealt than in the fact that it did something to awaken the mind of the church to their significance and urgency and attempted to lay foundations for their continued study in years to come.

Methods

Preparations for the conference followed a pattern of study conferences, drafting of papers, and sharing and revision of ideas which covered a period of three years.²⁷ This process has been described as "a venture of ecumenical thinking, which in thoroughness and range of cooperation has perhaps never been equaled by any previous Christian world gathering."²⁸

The role of the laity in addressing social issues was strongly emphasized at Oxford along with a call to the churches to better equip lay people to make an effective Christian witness in the contemporary world.²⁹ The Conference also recognized the need for the full participation of lay experts in analyzing complex social and political

²⁷Oxford (1937), pp. 6-9.

²⁸Ehrenstrom, p. 585. As the discussion above has indicated a number of these preparatory methods were tested at Stockholm and Jerusalem. Regarding conduct of the conference see footnote 22 above.

²⁹Oxford (1937), pp. 49-50.

issues in order to make an intelligent and respected response from the Christian community possible.³⁰

Issues

The theme of the Oxford Conference, "Church, Community and State," was divided into five categories for exploration:³¹

1. Church and Community.
2. Church and State.
3. Church, Community and State in Relation to the Economic Order.
4. Church, Community and State in Relation to Education.
5. The Universal Church and the World of Nations.

Section Three dealing with the economic order is of particular interest for the present study.

Economic issues were seen as playing a significant, if not dominating, role in personal, national and international relations. This perspective was summarized in the Section Three report with the assertion that "in the case of the majority of men relations are determined more directly and more continuously by the action of economic interests than by any other single force."³² Recognizing the destructive nature of personal greed and acquisitiveness guided by the profit motive the report also evidenced an

³⁰Oxford (1937), pp. 97-98.

³¹Oxford (1937), p. v.

³²Oxford (1937), p. 92.

awareness of the structural nature of economic injustice and recommended that action by Christians must include both efforts to act with integrity within the existing economic structures, and intentional involvement in changing and transforming existing economic systems.³³

TAMBARAM 1938

From its beginning the International Missionary Council evidenced concern that the indigenous leadership of the younger churches be present and participate in its deliberations. Efforts were made in preparation for the conference in an attempt to assure that at least fifty percent of the participants would be from the younger churches.³⁴ Tambaram, near Madras, was chosen for the site of the Conference with the intention of facilitating such participation.³⁵

A related concern dealt with representation from the "younger generation." This principle was dramatically emphasized in the expression of the desire that "one-third of the members of each delegation shall be under thirty-five years of age."³⁶

³³Oxford (1937), pp. 110-11.

³⁴Mott, pp. 303-313.

³⁵Tambaram (1938), p. 5.

³⁶Mott, p. 313.

The Jerusalem Conference had affirmed the importance of study and this emphasis was amplified at Tambaram. Ethical sensitivity and knowledge of social fact were set forth as the two elements which are essential in combating "social sin": "Sensitiveness without knowledge leads to sentimentality: knowledge without sensitiveness leads to a shallow humanism which lacks moral incentive."³⁷

The delegates gathered at Tambaram to consider the major theme of "The World Mission of the Church." Out of the reports of the sixteen sections that dealing with "The Church and the Changing Social and Economic Order" is of particular interest in the present project.³⁸

SUMMARY

A Christian faith characterized by the conviction that the Gospel speaks to every dimension of life inspired the early leaders of the ecumenical movement to lift up to the church its own failure in the face of human need and international turmoil and led them to call the church to a unity which would facilitate knowledgeable and effective response. These concerns were expressed primarily by seeking to provide opportunities where the churches could

³⁷Tambaram (1938), p. 108.

³⁸Tambaram (1938), pp. 105-14.

come together to express their common concern and their unity existing in Christ, and by identifying and analyzing issues in ways that would enable churches to challenge and educate their constituents.

A broad range of social, political, economic and moral issues were identified, although many of the problems discussed were related to inequality and injustice in economic relationships. Concern was expressed about injustice resulting from personal greed and irresponsibility. This was accompanied by an awareness of the structural nature of economic injustice; of the existence of systems which, by their nature and methods of operation, created and sustained inequality and oppression.³⁹

Theological issues also played a key role in the shaping and conduct of the discussions. By its very nature

³⁹A variety of specific economic issues and problems were addressed. Appendix B presents a summary of statements on economic issues included in reports from conferences held by the Universal Christian Council on Life and Work and the International Missionary Council during the period under consideration. Both considered a broad range of issues including the exploitation and use of science by capitalism, life styles which do not witness to the faith, the commercialization of agriculture, rural-urban migration, the need to move from preoccupation with charity to a concern for justice, and the confusion of patriotism with religion. The scope of the present project does not permit a full treatment of these issues. Nevertheless, it is important to appreciate how many of these issues identified during those early years still demand attention.

the ecumenical movement incorporates theological diversity. It was, therefore, not surprising that no uniform theology emerged to undergird and direct the social witness of the ecumenical movement during the period.⁴⁰

The calling to deal with social issues and assessments of what an ecumenical body could authentically do about them led to the adoption of a variety of methods. The movement was characterized by a pattern comprised of three basic elements: (1) preliminary study; (2) an ecumenical conference to discuss, correct, amend, and supplement thought about the issues raised; and, (3) a message and/or reports from the conference to the churches.

Steps were taken very early to create structures which would provide continuity and continued emphasis

⁴⁰While there is richness in diversity, it can also result in a certain amount of confusion and lack of coordination. This will be seen below in repeated calls from various groups over the years for a clear statement of the theological basis for addressing different issues. The problem surfaced quite early on, however, and was reflected in the call issued by William Adams Brown at the 1933 meeting of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work to set a clear common goal for the ecumenical movement. Brown also lifted up "the need for reinforcing the motives which furnish the movement with its driving power." Ehrenstrom, p. 559.

between major conferences.⁴¹ Among these the creation of research departments by both the IMC and the Life and Work Movement underscored the importance placed on issue identification, study and analysis. Careful study was deemed essential to avoid the pitfalls of making uninformed statements which would collapse under examination, or being reduced to speaking theological generalities about urgent problems.⁴²

Study conferences, comparatively small gatherings of persons often from one nation or region, which addressed a particular problem provided a popular method of exploring issues. Frequently these contributed to the preparation of the major conferences. In addition to bringing people together for meetings, staff visits and occasional publications were used to share information and increase

⁴¹In 1930 the Continuation Committee of the Stockholm Conference was reformed into a permanent body, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work due to the growing awareness that, "whereas the holding of periodical conferences is a useful part of ecumenical activity, concerns such as those of Stockholm 1925 can be adequately dealt with only by a permanent body, officially recognized, through which the work of one conference can be linked to that of another, and the Churches continuously kept in touch with one another and with the progressive development of ecumenical thought and activity." Ehrenstrom, p. 553.

⁴²Ehrenstrom, p. 593. While tremendous efforts have been made in the area of study over the years the paucity of knowledge about global conditions among Christian people suggests that the concern expressed by the ecumenical movement fifty years ago is valid today.

communication between churches. Since the movement made it clear from the beginning that it did not speak or legislate for any of the constituent churches the method of seeking influence by publishing the products of its meetings for "serious consideration and action" by the churches was adopted.⁴³

Although the two major movements considered in this chapter often used similar methods and addressed similar problems a fundamental difference in general orientation between the two was evident. Life and Work focused upon economic issues primarily from the perspective of and with a concern for their impact upon the industrialized nations in general and the western nations in particular. Within the IMC there was evidenced a much greater concern for what was happening in the underdeveloped nations in general and

⁴³This basic approach to dealing with social issues was formally incorporated in the Constitution of the World Council of Churches. The 1937 draft of that document contained the provision that "the Council should have no power to legislate for the churches or to commit them to action without their consent." W. A. Visser 'T Hooft in Rouse and Neill, p. 703.

At the Advisory Conference in 1938, Archbishop Temple emphasized that "any authority which a Council statement may have will consist in the weight it carries with the churches by its wisdom." Visser 'T Hooft, p. 704.

particularly in relation to the impact of western economic systems and policies on those nations.⁴⁴

This period was a formative, and in many ways a determinative one in shaping methods used and issues addressed by the ecumenical movement. Primarily the movement had sought to "challenge and educate the churches in the field of social and international responsibility."⁴⁵ The issues identified and the methods used to explore them would both figure significantly in the development of the concept of the Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society.

The commitment and vision of the leaders of the period continues to challenge and inspire. John R. Mott's assessment of the perspective necessary for Christian leadership as he looked forward to the Tambaram Conference and saw also a world on the brink of a second devastating war remains valid today. "They have realized that the issues confronting them are literally of world-wide concern, and can best be solved in a world context."⁴⁶

⁴⁴That this was the case is not surprising given the basic constituency of the two movements. Life and Work tried unsuccessfully to establish a section comprised of members from younger churches. The failure of this effort has been characterized by Ehrenstrom as "a clear indication of where its interests really lay." Ehrenstrom, p. 595.

⁴⁵Ehrenstrom, p. 595. During World War II direct involvement with refugees and prisoners of war provided a new dimension of ecumenical response to urgent problems.

⁴⁶Mott, p. 311.

Chapter 2

THE APPROACH OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
TO SOCIAL ISSUES: 1948-1975

On Monday 23rd August, 1948, in Amsterdam the World Council of Churches was formally constituted at its First Assembly. As we have seen in the previous chapter an elemental part of the process which led to the holding of that first assembly had been the concern of the churches to speak with a unified Christian voice on pressing human issues within and between nations. In this chapter attention will be given to the basic approach taken to social issues by the World Council. Special focus will be placed on the sub-unit on Church and Society since it was from this section of the World Council that the concept of a just and sustainable society emerged.

Because it is the purpose of this chapter to present an overview of the impact of certain dimensions of World Council activities relevant to the present study, rather than a general history of the period under consideration, thematic organization will be followed. An initial section will provide a brief chronological summary of the major World Council events in order to supply historical perspective for the thematic sections.

Consideration will be given to those dimensions of structure of the World Council apposite to the present

topic. This will help clarify the dimensions of the Council's activities under analysis, and the influence of organizational changes on the consideration of social issues by the Council. Attention will then be directed to the methods used to analyze and address social issues; followed by a general analysis of the issues addressed relevant to the present study. Finally, the nature and shape of ecumenical social ethics during the period will be briefly examined.

CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Five World Council assemblies were held between 1948 and 1975. During the periods between assemblies a number of major conferences were held and study programs conducted by the department of Church and Society which are of particular interest to the present study. Table 1 provides a summary of the dates and titles of these events.

STRUCTURE

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the study of pressing social issues was identified early on as a responsibility and necessity for the ecumenical movement if it was to speak responsibly and authoritatively. This concern was echoed in the formation of the World Council, and provided

Table 1
Chronological Summary of Assemblies and
Major Church and Society Study
Themes and Conferences

Assemblies and Major Conferences		Study Emphases	
1948	First Assembly Amsterdam	1948-1956	The Responsible Society
1952	The Responsible Society in Asia, Lucknow		
1954	Second Assembly		
1956	The Responsible Society in National and International Affairs, Arnoldshain	1955-1960	Rapid Social Change
1959	Christian Action in Rapid Social Change, Thessalonica		
1961	Third Assembly, New Delhi	1961-1966	World Conference on Church and Society
1966	World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva		
1968	Theological Issues of Church and Society, Zagorsk		
1968	Fourth Assembly, Uppsala	1969-1975	The Future of Man and Society in a World of Science Based Techno- logy, (The Futurum)
1974	Science and Technology for Human Devel- opment: The Ambiguous Future and the Christian Hope, Bucharest		
1975	Fifth Assembly	1976-1980	The Struggle for a Just, Partici- patory and Sustainable Society
1979	Faith, Science and the Future, Cambridge, Mass.		

for in its initial structure by the establishment of a Study Department.¹ Five general areas of responsibility were outlined for the department:²

1. The initiation of studies on questions which are of vital concern to the churches in the present world situation and which require ecumenical consultation.
2. The study preparations for the Assembly and other ecumenical gatherings.
3. A service of information and of the collection and classification of material on subjects of common concern to the churches.
4. The coordination of ecumenical study and research.
5. Surveys of attitude and action ongoing in the church and sharing of the results.

The Study Department is of particular interest because it was in direct relation to it that the Department on Church and Society was founded a few years later.

Structural Changes

Within three years of its inauguration at Amsterdam, the Central Committee set in motion a process which has continued in various forms up to the present time by establishing a Committee on Structure and Functioning charged with the responsibility of evaluating the operation of the World Council and suggesting organizational patterns which would best enable the Council to serve the churches.³ The

¹Documents of the WCC, Amsterdam (1948), p. 46.

²Documents . . . , p. 47.

³Official Report, 2nd Assembly, pp. 174-75.

Structure Committee's first report was presented to the 1954 Evanston Assembly and was intended to guide the organization and operation of the Council during the period following the second assembly.⁴ The plan provided for the establishment of the Division of Studies, comprised of three departments--Faith and Order, Church and Society, and Evangelism--and was intended to coordinate all study work conducted by the Council.⁵

The Committee on Structure and Function set forth the aim of each of the divisions and departments and spelled out certain functions which each was expected to perform. Those defined for the Division of Studies closely paralleled the guidelines set down for the Study Department in 1948, and included the provision that studies undertaken should help the churches "increasingly think together, advance in unity, render common witness and take common action in the social and international field."⁶

From its inception the Department on Church and Society was defined as having primary responsibility in the areas of initiating, facilitating and sharing the results

⁴Official Report, 2nd Assembly, pp. 174-214.

⁵Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 190. It was agreed at this time that the Division of Studies for the World Council would fulfill the same function of the IMC and thus a Department of Missionary Studies was also included.

⁶Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 199.

of study on social issues as its aim and functions as set forth by the Committee indicated:⁷

The aim of the Department shall be to serve the churches by the study of problems arising out of their mission in and to society.

The functions of the Department shall be:

- (i) to select for recommendation to the Division the crucial problems of society about which the churches should declare their common mind and take action including (in consultation with C.C.I.A.) such basic problems of international life and inter-racial relations as require long range study;
- (ii) to study in the light of the Christian faith, and together with competent persons from different churches and walks of life, relevant problems in this field;
- (iii) to disseminate the results of such studies;
- (iv) to keep the churches informed about important developments in society;
- (v) to acquaint churches with the action taken by other churches in this field;
- (vi) to assist other divisions or departments in relating their activities to society.

The first function set forth by the Committee was particularly significant because it provided a mandate to the Department to identify and lift up crucial issues rather than simply responding to requests from churches. This provision gave the Department the opportunity to select certain issues from time to time which may not have been of a high priority to the Council and the churches, and to press for their study and emphasis.

The Committee on Structure and Functioning also established working committees to guide and direct the work

⁷Official Report, 2nd Assembly, pp. 200-01.

of each department.⁸ Communication throughout the World Council was to be facilitated through the participation of members of the Central Committee, staff and others in these working committees.⁹

Major Revisions

Between the New Delhi and Uppsala Assemblies a newly appointed structure committee initiated a process of review and revision that would ultimately have far-reaching impact on the organization of the World Council.¹⁰ One of its recommendations apposite to the present study was the decision, affirmed by the Central Committee meeting at Uppsala in July 1968, to suspend the operations of the Division of Studies pending a major review of structure following the

⁸Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 195.

⁹Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 195. The working committee of the Department of Church and Society played an active role in the operation of that department.

¹⁰Statements of aims and functions of the divisions and departments were completed prior to the Third Assembly held in New Delhi in 1961. One reason for the accomplishment of this task was, no doubt, the formal merging of the IMC and the WCC at that assembly. While editorial changes were made and some functions were combined under single headings no substantive changes occurred in relation to the Division of Studies or the Department on Church and Society. See, Work Book, 3rd Assembly, p. 68 and p. 85.

Uppsala Assembly.¹¹ A constellation of factors may have contributed to this decision:

1. There appears to have been persistent difficulty in relating and coordinating studies undertaken by the various divisions and departments within the Council.¹²

2. Due to economic constraints and upper level staff changes within the Council the Division had been without a director for several years.¹³

3. The Humanum Study was in the offing and it was hoped that a coordinator for that program could be found who would be able to facilitate greater cooperation among the departments.¹⁴

4. Many if not all of the departments were involved in study programs and thus the role of the Department of Studies was increasingly ambiguous.

5. It was hoped that it would be possible to diversify the approach to study taken by the Council.¹⁵

The Department on Church and Society continued to function and was related directly to the General Secretariat for

¹¹Central Committee Minutes, 22nd (1968), p. 28.

¹²Report of the Central Committee to the 3rd Assembly, p. 54; Central Committee Minutes, 22nd (1968), p. 28.

¹³Official Report, 4th Assembly, p. 367.

¹⁴Central Committee Minutes, 22nd (1968), p. 28; Official Report, 4th Assembly, pp. 203-205.

¹⁵Official Report, 4th Assembly, p. 203.

purposes of general administration and coordination during the review period.¹⁶

Addis Ababa provided the venue for the 1971 meeting of the Central Committee. It was at this meeting that the Structure Committee submitted its report which would result in a major reordering of the Council. The former divisional structure was replaced by the creation of three Program Units: Faith and Witness; Justice and Service; and, Education and Communication.¹⁷ The Working Group on Church and Society was included as a sub-unit of the Faith and Witness Program Unit, with the Commission on Faith and Order, The Commission of World Mission and Evangelism and the Working Group on Dialogue with Men of Living Faiths and Ideologies also included in that Unit.¹⁸

Under this new structure the Unit operated under a common aim, and functions were shared by the sub-units. The sub-unit on Church and Society was now to function under the following guidelines:¹⁹

AIM: To seek God's will for the Unity of the Church, to assist the churches to explore the content and meaning of the Gospel for their faith and mission, to

¹⁶Central Committee Minutes, 22nd (1968), p. 28.

¹⁷Central Committee Minutes, 22nd (1968), p. 28.

¹⁸Central Committee Minutes, 24th (1971), p. 160.

¹⁹Central Committee Minutes, 24th (1971), p. 162.

encourage dialogue with men of other faiths and ideologies, and to enquire into the bearing of Christian belief on the spiritual and ethical issues posed for society by science and technology.

FUNCTIONS:

(1) To gather the churches for common reflection on the content and meaning of the Gospel and the manner of its proclamation and witness.

(3) To promote and carry out biblical and theological studies on the nature of Christian life and witness as demand arises from the life of member churches in their encounter with the contemporary world and from the concerns of the various branches of the ecumenical movement.

(6) To promote dialogue with men of living faiths including secular ideologies, and to help the churches to discern its implications for their life and for the understanding and communication of the Gospel in different situations.

(7) To promote interdisciplinary studies by groups of theologians, philosophers, scientists and others influencing the thought of men, to examine together the challenge to faith and human existence arising in modern science, philosophy and ideology, and to advise the churches on the ethical implications of such studies.

The change in focus and emphasis from the functions defined for Church and Society at Evanston was dramatic. Gone was the mandate to identify and promote crucial issues of society and international life. Greater emphasis was to be placed on biblical and theological questions in response to issues raised by the churches.²⁰ Thus it may be seen that the

²⁰Evidenced here was what appeared to be a major shift from seeking to lead the churches to consider "new" issues to exploring issues on the agendas of the churches. This should have resulted, in effect, in less speaking-to and more working-for the churches.

A striking similarity existed between the basic content of function number seven listed above and the study being conducted by Church and Society in the early seventies

sub-unit on Church and Society may be traced through the Division of Studies to the Study Department, and that its mandate has changed significantly over the years.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY METHODS

From its inception at Evanston the Department of Church and Society adopted the methods of ecumenical study which had become familiar. In preparation for the New Delhi Assembly the Department summed up the nature of its activities by saying "the techniques of study which we have followed thus far have included consultations, individual and group research and the dissemination and exchange of background information."²¹ Much of the Department's activity had focused and continued to focus on facilitating and coordinating regional consultations and international study conferences.²²

on "The Future of Man and Society in a World of Science-based Technology." Reflected here is, perhaps, an acknowledgment of the Department's long standing interest in science and technology and its orientation toward study conferences. See the following discussions on Methods and Issues.

²¹Work Book, 3rd Assembly, p. 87.

²²Detailed discussions of the methods followed are available in the reports of the particular conferences. In addition the methods used at major conferences have been frequently documented in the survey works (see Rouse and Neill, Fey, Gaines, etc.). Of interest at this point is the fact the methods used have remained basically the same.

Study Themes

Frequently the consultations and study conferences were carried out in relation to the exploration of an over-arching theme being examined by the Department. Over the years these themes have served as the focal point of the Department's activities between assemblies. Although "The Responsible Society" was never a particular study theme for Church and Society, the Department contributed to its discussion, making it the subject of its first major study conference.²³ In subsequent years the department organized study programs on the following themes: "Rapid Social Change," 1955-1960; "World Conference on Church and Society," 1961-1968; "The Future of Man and Society in a World of Science-based Technology," 1969-1975; "The Struggle for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society," 1976-1980.²⁴

The method of selecting these major programs of study appears to have changed somewhat during the early years of the World Council. In his pioneering work on the social thought of the Council completed in 1954, Duff

²³That conference, held in Arnoldshain, Germany in 1956, and organized in cooperation with the CCIA, was in response to the concept of the responsible society developed at the Amsterdam Assembly.

²⁴During the periods covered by these themes the Department was involved in other activities as well.

complained in his closing section on "inherent difficulties" that the Study Department was severely hampered by the methodology under which it operated because "even the topics it examines are determined by the Central Committee."²⁵

Less than a year later it was reported that the process which led to the Rapid Social Change Study had pursued the following course:²⁶

a. In seeking to respond to concerns raised at the Second Assembly the Church and Society staff developed ideas for a study on the effects of rapid social change in the developing world;

b. The staff presented its ideas to the working committee of the department which further refined and shaped a proposal for study.

c. This proposal was then presented by the working group to the Central Committee which approved the program. There appears to be a significant difference between the two methods of operation. The former indicating dictation by the Central Committee; the latter signifying the Committee's approval of a plan submitted to it. It is basically this second procedure which has prevailed up to the present.

²⁵Duff, p. 299.

²⁶Report of the Central Committee to the 3rd Assembly, pp. 47-48.

Lay Involvement

Intentional effort led to significant lay involvement in Church and Society study programs over the years. From 1959 onward the Department reported over fifty percent lay participation at its major conferences.²⁷ Emphasis was generally placed on recruiting "experts" who could provide detailed and/or technical information.²⁸

A second question related to lay involvement is concerned with the nature of the participation sought from lay persons once their presence is secured. The 1966 Geneva Conference provided one example of the tensions which have arisen in relation to this issue in Church and Society discussions. Reference was made in the Conference Report to "an attempt at the conference to make use of the experience of laymen in identifying the ethical problems of modern life and also in determining the relevant formulation of theological criteria."²⁹ At the same conference Denys Munby,

²⁷Report of the Central Committee to the 3rd Assembly, p. 50; Report of the Central Committee to the 4th Assembly, p. 62.

²⁸It should be remembered that this concern for active lay participation was voiced at Oxford in 1937 and at other conferences during those formative years. This emphasis on lay involvement grew, as noted, out of an awareness of the need for the church to shape informed positions so that its voice on particular issues might draw attention and respect from a larger constituency. For the emphasis on "expert" opinions see: Official Report, 4th Assembly, p. 203.

²⁹Geneva (1966), pp. 39-40.

a layman long involved with the ecumenical movement issued this challenge:³⁰

But we want to know from the theologians where is God at work in these dynamic forces and where is the devil at work? I think there is something in contextual ethics, relying on principles behind it, but we laymen, if we honestly admit it, are really in the dark.

These tensions will reappear in the course of the present study. At this juncture, however, it must be noted that the number and the professional nature of the lay participants, as well as the types of involvement sought from them have clearly influenced ecumenical dialogue.

ISSUES

Spanning a period of twenty-seven years, from 1948 to 1975, the section reports most closely related to the work of Church and Society from the five World Council Assemblies held to date have addressed a core of issues. While details and forms of analysis have evolved the basic nature of the central issues has remained essentially unchanged.

In his survey work, "In Search of A Responsible World Society," Paul Bock provided a comprehensive overview of major social issues addressed by the World Council and its forerunners from 1925 to 1970.³¹ No attempt will be

³⁰Geneva (1966), p. 27.

³¹Bock, 242 pages.

made to duplicate or rehearse in detail Bock's work in that volume. Some observations relevant to the present study and/or growing out of developments within the ecumenical movement after the period covered by his work are required, however.

Bock's work gave evidence of the impact of the studies and related conferences conducted by the Department of Church and Society between assemblies upon the reports adopted by the subsequent assembly, ranging from the influence of the 1952 Lucknow Conference on the Evanston Report to the dominating influence of the 1966 Geneva Conference on the Uppsala Report.³² In his discussion of trends in ecumenical social thought, the periods identified and their titles were categorized according to the departmental studies.³³

Table 2 presents a summary of issues addressed in the assembly section reports which most strongly reflected the work of Church and Society. Issues are grouped on the basis of their relationship to justice, participation or sustainability with the understanding that in some cases varying degrees of overlapping concern may exist between those three categories (see Chapter 7).

³²Bock, pp. 72, 210.

³³Bock, pp. 30-51.

Summary of Issues 1948-1975

	Issues ¹	Assemblies ²				
		A	E	D	U	N
	Concentrations of power	X			X	X
	Church identification with privileged	X		X		
	Equality of opportunity	X		X	X	
	Communism and capitalism	X	X	X		
	Racism	X		X	X	
J	Impact of national policies internationally		X		X	X
	Over emphasis on military "solutions"		X			X
	Political and economic self-determination		X	X	X	X
	Land tenure reform		X		X	X
	Funding development		X	X	X	X
	Smaller scales of organization	X	X			
	Involvement in decision making	X		X	X	X
	Lay activity	X		X	X	X
	Inner renewal of church	X	X	X		
P	Political involvement		X	X	X	X
	Expand educational opportunities		X	X	X	X
	Solidarity			X	X	X
	Alternative Political structures		X	X	X	X
	Isolationism				X	
	Role and control of technology	X		X	X	X
	Soil conservation		X			X
	Creation of unlimited wants		X	X		X
	Cultural sensitivity in development		X	X	X	X
	Population growth		X		X	X
	Concern for future generations			X		X
	Faith and science			X		X
	Humanity, nature and God			X		X
S	Nuclear issues			X		X
	Disarmament			X		X
	Stewards of creation					X
	Limits-to-growth					X
	Meeting basic human need			X	X	X
	Critique of political and economic structures	X	X	X	X	X
	Common resources					X

¹ J=Justice; P=Participation; S=Sustainability.

² A=Amersterdam; E=Evanston; D=New Delhi; U=Uppsala; N=Nairobi.

Expanding the Perspective

Mention was made in the previous chapter of the western bias in the Life and Work movement. This orientation prevailed at the Amsterdam Assembly as well.³⁴ At Evanston the concerns of the emerging nations were given a place of prominence alongside those of North American and European churches.³⁵ This pattern carried through the New Delhi Assembly, but at Uppsala an interruption occurred with an almost exclusive emphasis on the urgent issues related to Third World and development.³⁶ To a significant degree the Uppsala report represented a consolidation of concern about several issues which had been raised at previous assemblies. That this constellation was formed at Uppsala was undoubtedly a reflection of that historical period during which the nations and peoples of the Third World began to assert their dignity and rights. The Nairobi report included, as did the reports of the second and third assemblies, a mixture of the first and third world concerns.

³⁴Bock, p. 221.

³⁵See Appendix C which presents a detailed analysis of trends in assembly themes related to Church and Society from Amsterdam to Nairobi. Section reports are outlined and themes are cross-referenced.

³⁶The word interruption is used intentionally to describe the deviation from the trend of a more balanced presentation of first and third world concerns.

Again, as may be seen in Table 2, many of the issues mentioned at Nairobi, and particularly those listed under "New Dimensions" (see Appendix C), had been treated in previous assemblies dating back to Amsterdam.³⁷

Technology

Bock's survey was organized under six categories: the political and economic orders; war and peace; communism; racial and ethnic relations; economic and social development; and, the church in the world. The question of technology was given passing mention in relation to future study, and in relation to the tension which its mention created between representatives from the first and third worlds.³⁸ That the concern within the ecumenical movement about the nature, use and effects of science and technology received no emphasis in Bock's treatment is of interest not only because of the attention given to them recently in the

³⁷A particularly puzzling incidence was the assertion that "poverty, we are learning, is caused primarily by unjust structures that leave resources and the power to make decisions about the utilization of resources in the hands of a few within nations and among nations" Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 123. Attention had been repeatedly called to the structural nature of evil in general and particularly within economic systems beginning with the Life and Work and IMC conferences in the 1930's.

³⁸Bock, pp. 5, 67, 209, 225.

World Council, but also because of concerns expressed as early as the 1937 Oxford Conference.³⁹

Technology was cited in the Amsterdam report as one of two factors significantly responsible for the "crisis of our age."⁴⁰ The New Delhi report had echoed certain dimensions of this concern, particularly in its sections on "Nature, Science and Change," and "The Effects of Technical Society and the Nuclear Arms Race on Human Dignity," and had previewed a major concern of the Futurum Study in its discussion of the relationship between faith and science.⁴¹ As the title and the outline of the Nairobi section report indicate (Appendix C), the bulk of that report was devoted to exploring issues related to power and technology. The emphasis on science and technology in Church and Society discussions since 1970 represents a progression of thought over many years.

Ebb and Flow

Certain other trends have appeared over time. Issues which figured prominently in early Assemblies, such as capitalist-communist tensions and the theme of the

³⁹Oxford (1937), p. 82.

⁴⁰Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 75.

⁴¹Official Report, 3rd Assembly, pp. 96-97.

responsible society in later years no longer appeared as major items on the agenda.

Some general types of issues and concerns, such as those related to politics and economics, have appeared consistently over the years. In most cases the discussions have focused more sharply on specific problems with the passage of time. Of particular interest for the present study is the fact that all five of the official assembly messages have expressed a concern for justice, even when that concept may not have been prominent in the section reports.⁴² As Table 2 indicates not only in the case of science and faith, but also with concerns related to population and hunger, some issues seem to wax and wain and appear again. And, as one would expect, on occasion new issues emerge: The introduction of the concept of sustainability at Nairobi being of most interest to the present study.

ECUMENICAL SOCIAL ETHICS

The quest for what might be called an ecumenical ethic has followed an erratic course. A propensity to eschew ethical systems emphasizing norms and principles

⁴²Emulating a procedure begun early in the ecumenical movement, each assembly from Amsterdam through Nairobi has issued a brief official message. See the respective Official Reports.

in favor of "inspirational" and situational approaches was evidenced early on in the ecumenical movement.⁴³ Although this perspective dominated many discussions occurring as late as the sixties, more recent reports have reflected a willingness to explore at least some criteria to guide ethical reflection and action.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Uppsala Assembly lifted up the "urgent" need for theological reflection and guidance on social issues,⁴⁵ and Nairobi called for ethical reflection in relation to the sustainable society and on questions concerning science and technology.⁴⁶

It appears to be the case that when it has met in assembly the World Council has sensed the deep need for theological guidance and a coherent ethic, but it has found it difficult to move in the direction of defining either. In his first chapter Bock summarized the difficulties in formulating an ecumenical ethic by pointing primarily to the wide diversity of opinion and belief represented in the movement.⁴⁷ Abrecht also discussed the difficulties presented by the theological diversity within the Council

⁴³Duff, pp. 93-104.

⁴⁴See discussions in Parts Two and Three following.

⁴⁵Official Report, 4th Assembly, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁶Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 138-39.

⁴⁷Bock, pp. 24-27.

to attempts to formulate an ecumenical ethic and concluded that "up to the present time, the ecumenical consensus on Christian social responsibility has been limited, experimental and provisional, and with relatively slight impact on the action of the churches in society."⁴⁸

There have been study conferences and published symposia which have discussed ethics in the context of the ecumenical enterprise, and a variety of perspectives have emerged.⁴⁹ The 1968 Zagorsk Consultation on "Theological Issues of Church and Society," however, struggled with the question of the substance of apparent agreement on particular issues at conferences and was led to pose the question "of whether we are dealing with an agreement among individual Christian consciences or with a consensus among churches . . . "⁵⁰

In addition to confronting the meaning of statements agreed upon at conferences the Zagorsk Consultation examined the basic approaches to ethical reflection. On the one hand, the deductive approach, characterized by reasoning based on biblical principles and eternal laws was criticized on the

⁴⁸Paul Abrecht, "The Development of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action," in Fey, p. 259.

⁴⁹E.g. John Bennett (ed.) Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World (New York: Association Press, 1966); and Preston.

⁵⁰Zagorsk Consultation Statement, in "Theological Issues of Church and Society," Study Encounter, IV, 1 (1968), 71.

grounds that "the perennial principles employed in Christian social ethics have proved to be relative to their time and situation."⁵¹ On the other hand, the inductive method, emphasizing the need to reason from the particular situation, was critiqued with the assertion that:⁵²

no person, and especially no Christian, can do without certain basic principles of human existence as working criteria with which to evaluate the different situations in which he lives. The biblical truth about God's will and acts cannot be derived solely from the situation.

Thus it was proposed that a method of "dialectical interaction" be employed which would incorporate the strengths of the deductive and inductive approaches by seeking to consider the particular factors in each situation in dialogue with the core of the Christian faith.⁵³ This would, it was hoped, secure "more widespread agreement on the 'human' as an ecumenical criterion for Christian social ethics."⁵⁴

⁵¹Zagorsk (1968), p. 72.

⁵²Zagorsk (1968), p. 72.

⁵³Zagorsk (1968), p. 72.

⁵⁴Zagorsk (1968), p. 72. This position would be challenged in the 1970's with the introduction of process thought into Church and Society discussions and the corresponding emphasis on the intrinsic value of all creation and the rights of nature. See Parts Two and Three following.

SUMMARY

From its inauguration at Amsterdam up to the present time the World Council of Churches has continued to struggle with and search for organizational structure which will facilitate internal cooperation and enable it to fulfill its responsibilities to member churches. In terms of structure significant changes have taken place concerning the responsibility for study in general and in relation to Church and Society in particular. The restructuring proposal adopted in 1971 significantly altered the aim and functions of Church and Society, placing specific emphasis for the sub-unit on the consideration of issues related to faith, science and technology and their theological and ethical implications.

While restructuring did effect certain methods of reporting the same basic methods of study and inquiry developed early in the ecumenical movement continued to be followed. The sub-unit on Church and Society pursued selected major emphases by encouraging and coordinating study and research. Increased efforts were made from time to time to engage lay people in the study of issues of concern to the sub-unit and to utilize and share research done by a larger constituency within and beyond the churches.

Over the years an identifiable set of issues has received repeated attention. These included economic and

political structure, war and peace, racism, communism, social and economic development, and science and technology. That some of these are no longer mentioned in reports related to Church and Society is often a reflection of restructuring within the World Council rather than the abandonment of a crucial concern. Throughout its history, Church and Society has evidenced a certain preoccupation with science and technology which appears to have been recognized in the restructuring as well as literally reflected in its choice of themes for study programs and conferences.

World Council discussions have frequently reflected the need for ethical guidance on pressing social issues. Dialectical interaction was proposed as the guiding and coordinating principle for ecumenical discussions of social ethics. Given the diverse nature of the ecumenical movement it is not surprising that a uniform and coherent ecumenical ethic has failed to emerge. However, a variety of challenging and at times inspiring perspectives on important ethical issues await the student or activist willing to enter into the ecumenical discussions on ethics.

PART II

JUSTICE, PARTICIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY
IN ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION 1925-1974

PART II

INTRODUCTION

In Part I dimensions of the approaches taken by the ecumenical movement to social issues were traced. Particular attention was given to the Department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches since it was that department which originally had responsibility for inquiry into social issues, and since it is from the efforts of that department that the concept of a sustainable and just society emerged.

During the almost fifty year period under consideration we have seen that a number of issues have received the attention of the ecumenical movement. Rarely during that time period have justice, participation or sustainability been treated as a specifically articulated central theme or focus by an assembly or by Church and Society. Often, however, the social issues addressed were discussed in relation to justice. Less frequently references to participation have occurred. The concept of sustainability formally entered the realm of ecumenical discussion in 1974. While it would, therefore, be fruitless to search for explicit references to sustainability prior to that time, a variety of concerns relevant to the concept such as resource use and abuse, conservation and preservation of the environment and

creative relations between humanity and the rest of creation did occur.

The purpose of this part of the present study is to examine the development of the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability within early ecumenical and Church and Society discussions. One chapter will be devoted to an exploration of each of the terms. Firstly, and most importantly, we will be looking for instances of efforts to state a coherent definition of a concept, and for implications of that definition in terms of application. In relation to justice, for example, it will be asked if there were any occasions where a systematic and careful definition of justice was offered and then its implications explored.

Secondly, in the absence of an organized development of a concept attention will be given to identifying some aspects of the meaning of the concept from the way in which it was used. To continue with the example of justice, the following statement from the Amsterdam Assembly provided some insight into what justice might mean although no systematic treatment of the concept occurred: "Justice demands that economic activity be subordinated to social ends."

Thirdly, the ambiguous appeals to a concept such as justice in ecumenical literature are legion. Such references invoke a principle but provide no real insight into what is meant by it; as, for example, when the Amsterdam

Assembly observed that churches "have often been obstacles to changes necessary in the interest of social justice and political freedom." No attempt will be made to catalogue or cite references of the third variety.

Each of the three chapters will be developed on an historical outline beginning with the early period spanning the years from 1925 to 1948. Attention will then be given to the first twenty years of the World Council's activities, 1948 to 1968. For both of these periods attention will be focused on the official reports of assemblies and major Church and Society conferences. The last period to be considered in this part is that running from 1968 to 1975. The Futurum Study conducted during those years will be examined in greater detail due to the fact that it is from that inquiry that the concept of the just and sustainable society emerged.

Chapter 3

JUSTICE

Justice has formed a part of the Judeo-Christian tradition from the virtual beginnings of the faith. In ancient times it was intoned to consume like a flood. More contemporary literature, both religious and secular in origin, has repeatedly challenged people to struggle, to fight, to pursue social, economic, political, legal or other forms of justice. But what is meant by this term justice to which appeals have so often been made to stir the passions of humanity? Repeated experience has indicated that it is at best naive, and that it can be dangerous and destructive, to assume that appeals to justice will be interpreted in similar fashion by persons of varying social, economic, political, geographical, racial, sexual or other perspectives.

The task of this chapter is to distill the meanings which have been given to justice in the ecumenical dialogue under consideration in this study. Special attention will be given to the identification of clearly articulated concepts of justice. As indicated in the introduction to this part, if no intentional development of the meaning of justice was presented in a report efforts will be made to discern what was meant by the concept in that context

from analysis of the statements in which justice was employed. This inquiry will be guided by four basic questions: How was justice defined? What authority was cited to undergird the concept? How was the concept of justice applied to contemporary issues? What results were expected or projected from that application?

It must be emphasized that this method does not imply that where no specific mention of justice was made that it is assumed that no concern for justice was present. Rather, the focus of the present inquiry is not on what may have been implied or inferred about justice, but what understandings and concepts of justice adopted by the ecumenical movement have informed and guided its statements.

THE EARLY YEARS 1925-1948

During these early years a dynamic progression occurred from the Stockholm Conference, in the report of which we find no explicit reference to justice, to the report of the Oxford Conference which contained what was in many ways the most systematic and detailed consideration of justice set forth by a major ecumenical conference in this century. The genesis of the Oxford statements may be discerned in the struggles and discussions of some of the ecumenical conferences which were held between 1925-1937.

Context and Critical Stance

Little systematic reflection on the concept of justice appeared in the report of the 1928 IMC conference at Jerusalem. The section of the report entitled "Protection against Economic and Social Injustice" lifted up the plight of industrial workers in and from underdeveloped areas citing particular evils and suggesting alternative practices to safeguard working conditions and family life.¹ The practice of prosecuting as criminals those workers who failed to observe every detail of a labor agreement was described as being "incompatable with modern ideas of justice," but no futher insight into those ideas of justice was provided.²

In 1930 a Christian Social Workers Conference was convened in London. The report of the section on "The Churches and Present-day Economic Problems" reflected considerable discussion on the origins and, to a certain extent, the nature of a theory of justice.³ One of the papers presented appealed for:⁴

¹Jerusalem (1928), pp. 12-14.

²Jerusalem (1928), p. 13.

³London (1930), pp. 20-24.

⁴London (1930), p. 20.

the recognition of certain minimum principles of universal justice which are so deeply embedded in the constitution of the world that they appeal directly to the conscience of mankind apart from the special revelation of Christianity and can be seen by reason to be essential to the stability and peace of social life.

Some members of the conference expressed reservations about such a strong and exclusive grounding of the principle of justice in Natural Law.⁵ A second concern, which became a characteristic element in many ecumenical discussions of justice was raised at London in the form of a question (and a caution) about whether or not it was appropriate, in light of history, for the church "to adopt a philosophy which in the course of time may become obsolete."⁶

The report of the 1932 Basle study conference on unemployment included no explicit exploration of justice, but the study conference held a year later at Rengsdorf expanded significantly the debate begun at London. Summarized in the theological discussions at Rengsdorf were what would become two of the guiding principles in ecumenical perspectives on justice: the need to share positions and take stances always in relation to the contemporary

⁵London (1930), p. 20. Thus occurred the formal introduction into the ecumenical dialogue of the debate, which would span many years, over the proper source from which to develop concepts of justice.

⁶London (1930), p. 20.

context; and, the necessity of maintaining a critical stance in relation to all forms of social, economic or political organization.⁷

God wills an ordered human society and in the light of revelation definite principles and standards given in creation for social living can be discovered. The creative and ordering will of God for human society must be found for every period and its conditions by courageously following the call to seek it; and its historical expression can therefore not be laid down once for all. Consequently, the church is not bound absolutely to any particular social order, and has freedom to judge any social order on its own merits.

Oxford: Love and Justice

Both of the principles articulated at Rengsdorf were reflected in the report of the 1937 Oxford Conference. The first, concerned with avoiding an absolute rigidity, may be seen in the proposition of the now well known "middle axioms" which were intended to set down certain principles which could guide Christian thought and action in the contemporary setting, but which made no claims to universal validity.⁸ The influence of the second principle in the Rengsdorf statement, which had emphasized the relative nature of all human institutions, appeared

⁷Rengsdorf (1933), p. 43. This 1933 statement provides an interesting parallel to the method of "dialectical interaction" proposed thirty-five years later at Zagorsk (see Chapter 2 above)

⁸Oxford (1937), p. 219.

in the repeated assertions at Oxford of the position that God alone is the author of justice and that all political, social and economic forms, while they may have commendable elements, fall under God's judgement and Christian scrutiny.⁹

While the Oxford Conference, like some of its predecessors, repeatedly invoked justice it went a significant step further in the section on the economic order when it explicitly examined the nature and meaning of justice. It was the first, and last, major ecumenical conference to discuss the meaning of justice in some detail and to include the substance of that discussion as a part of the product of the conference. The basic nature of the concept was set forth in this way:¹⁰

The relative and departmental standard for all the social arrangements and institutions, all the economic structures and political systems, by which the life of man is ordered is the principle of justice. Justice, as the ideal of a harmonious relation of life to life, obviously presupposes the sinful tendency of one life to take advantage of another. This sinful tendency it seeks to check by defining the rightful place and privilege which each life must have in the harmony of the whole and by assigning the duty of each to each. Justice does not demand that the self sacrifice itself completely for the neighbor's good, but seeks to define and to maintain the good which each member of the community may rightfully claim in the harmony of the whole.

⁹Oxford (1937), pp. 66-67, 78.

¹⁰Oxford (1937), pp. 76-77.

Three dimensions of justice emerged from this discussion: (1) the relation of life to life in harmony; (2) the assignment of the place, privilege and duty of each life in relation to others in order to maintain harmony; and, (3) the definition and maintainance of the good which individuals have the right to claim in the context of the relational harmony.

Attention was then directed to the role of justice. It was asserted that justice may function negatively by preventing evil, even to the point of exercising coercive power which may well generate resentment in those who have been restrained.¹¹

The governing principle of love was introduced in the proposal that justice performs a positive function as well in so far as it may guide the formation of structures which nourish harmony. The primacy of love was postulated with the assertion that "the man who is in Christ knows a higher obligation which transcends the requirements of justice - the obligation of love which is a fulfillment of the law."¹² Within human society love is no substitute for law. Since love is exercised by

¹¹Oxford (1937), p. 77. This was, in effect the traditional "dike against sin" application.

¹²Oxford (1937), p. 78.

individuals there is still a need to seek the best institutional structures possible to provide societal safeguards.¹³

The relationship between love and justice in political and economic matters was explained as having a double nature: "love is an ideal which reaches beyond any possible achievements in the field of politics, but it is nevertheless also a standard by which various schemes of justice may be judged."¹⁴ In terms of application the Christian must avoid applying the standard of love in such a way that all systems are arbitrarily judged totally inadequate because they do not approach the norm. Equally important, the temptation to identify one particular system as the embodiment of God's will must be avoided.¹⁵ The transcendence of love over justice was reflected in the analysis of human conditions when systems which give some persons undue advantage over others were

¹³Oxford (1937), p. 78.

¹⁴Oxford (1937), p. 78.

¹⁵Oxford (1937), pp. 78-79.

condemned, not as unjust, but as violating the law of love.¹⁶

Further insight into the development of the concept of justice at Oxford was revealed in the discussion of the distinctions between various forms of property. It was asserted that property which gave the owners social power, such as factory ownership, "stands in need of special moral scrutiny, since power to determine the lives of others is the crucial point in any scheme of justice."¹⁷ Equality of opportunity was defended, but equality in the distribution of goods was explicitly rejected in favor of an implied equity.¹⁸ Related to these points was the provision in this theory of justice for rightful place and privilege, which were described as being necessary within the harmony of the whole.¹⁹

¹⁶Oxford (1937), p. 80. In his doctoral dissertation Richard Nesmith referred to the "usage of justice as the central norm" at Oxford. It would appear more accurate to conclude that the law of love was the normative principle which guided the interpretation and application of justice. Richard Nesmith, "The Development of the Concept of Responsible Society: Stockholm to Evanston" (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1957), p. 69.

¹⁷Oxford (1937), p. 101.

¹⁸Oxford (1937), p. 88.

¹⁹In this respect the Oxford theory of justice paralleled platonic thought.

It must be assumed that the assignment of this rightful place and privilege would be done under the law of love, but the application of this dimension of justice remained ambiguous. No clear indication was given on who was to make the assessment, or on what criteria it might be based.

The analysis of the social, economic, and political situations existing in the late nineteen thirties guided by this concept of justice governed by love has long been recognized as a landmark in ecumenical social thought. In its discussion of the economic situation the Oxford report repeatedly lifted up how the impacts of trade, manufacturing, finance and technology violated the first dimension in the concept of justice, the harmonious relation of life to life, by creating increasing gaps between rich and poor. Harmony was clearly the internal governing principal within the Oxford concept of justice.

Enough, but not Too Much

The last major ecumenical conference held during this early period was the 1938 meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram. A number of social and economic issues were discussed, but no systematic discussion of justice was reported. In fact the mere mention

of the term was extremely rare. The most notable reference, however, was in relation to the just distribution of material resources which would result in each person having what is needed to develop God given potential, and no one having so much that such development would be inhibited.²⁰

During these early years a number of positions and principles were advanced which would remain familiar characteristics of the discussion of justice within the ecumenical movement. Natural Law was appealed to as the basis for a theory of justice, but to that came a quick response emphasising the importance of God's revelation in Christ as a determinative factor in any Christian concept of justice.

Any attempt to define justice and a related ethical system in absolute terms which could be applied at all times in all places was rejected. Circumstances varied too greatly among individuals and nations, and change came too quickly to allow the church to be captivated by that kind of rigidity. Openness to the real conditions faced by living men, women and children, and the freedom to respond to God's call in those conditions was what the faith required; not a moral straight jacket.

²⁰Tambaram (1938), p. 108.

The Oxford Conference offered a concept of justice centered on harmony and guided by the law of love. While the development of the concept of justice was ambiguous at points, it nevertheless represented a truly ecumenical effort to define and apply a theory of justice. Oxford also asserted the right and the necessity of preventing the use of the Christian faith to bless any particular political or economic system, reminding the churches that all systems stand under the judgement of God. The course for the discussion of justice in the ecumenical movement had been charted.

THE WORLD COUNCIL 1948-1968

During the World Council's first twenty years the Department of Church and Society convened a variety of conferences which produced an array of contributions to the ecumenical discussions of justice. At times some of these were reflected in the reports of subsequent assemblies. The pursuit of the course charted during the early years would prove both interesting and erratic.

Amsterdam to Evanston: A "Stultifying" Failure

The report of Section III on "The Church and the Disorder of Society" from the Amsterdam Assembly frequently employed the term justice, speaking of its demands and

requirements and proclaiming that it must be affirmed and established. Assertions were made that justice demands more industrialization in Asia and Africa, and that "justice demands that economic activities be subordinated to social ends,"²¹ but no definition or development of a theory of justice was offered to enforce or interpret the nature of the demands.

An interesting application of justice appeared in the Amsterdam discussion of the differences between communism and capitalism. The two systems were differentiated according to the emphasis placed on justice and freedom: communism being portrayed as pressing for economic justice now and promising freedom later; capitalism being described as stressing freedom now and trusting that justice will result from free enterprise.²² Concluding that both claims are spurious, the report asserted that "it is the responsibility of Christians to seek now, creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy each other."²³

²¹Official Report, 1st Assembly, pp. 75-76.

²²Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 80.

²³Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 80. The tremendous international tensions being created by the two economic systems during that time obviously conditioned not only the choice of subject matter for the report, but also the approach to it. Over the years a variety of relationships between justice and freedom would be defined. See the summary at the end of this chapter.

In 1952 the Study Department took the opportunity presented by the meeting of the Central Committee at Lucknow, India, to convene an ecumenical study conference for East Asia. The opening paragraphs of the conference report provided some insight into the understanding of social justice employed at Lucknow:²⁴

We are concerned with social justice, that is to say with the development of social conditions in which human dignity and freedom can find their expression as befits the nature and destiny of man as a child of God.

Although this statement was brief and was not developed more fully in the report it did provide a general frame of reference for statements appealing to the requirements and demands of justice. Whereas Amsterdam had placed justice and freedom in contention with each other, Lucknow included freedom within its concept of social justice.

Edward Duff, writing at the end of 1954, concluded that up to that time the ecumenical movement had failed to provide any coherent theory of justice, and described that failure as "stultifying."²⁵ He went on to quote Emil Brunner's accusation that "Protestant Christianity has had none [theory of justice] for some three hundred

²⁴"The Responsible Society in East Asia," Ecumenical Review, V, 3 (April 1953), 298.

²⁵Duff, pp. 117, 297.

years past," and cited Brunner's conclusion that it is for that reason²⁶

the Protestant church is so unsure of itself in questions of the social order, economics, law, politics, and international law, and why its statements on these subjects are so haphazard and improvised that they fail to carry conviction.

Evanston to New Delhi: Avoiding Specificity

At the Evanston Assembly a delegate had found it necessary to request the definition of justice, democracy, and freedom in one of the section discussions.²⁷ The assembly report gave no indication that the plea was answered, or if an answer was given it was not deemed important at that juncture for the World Council to identify a theory of justice which would guide and interpret its statements on social issues. One of the positions enunciated at Rengsdorf was re-echoed in the Evanston assertion that "justice is dynamic and its forms must vary to meet changing needs," while the appeal to love as the sensitizing and guiding principle kindled memories of the Oxford discussions.²⁸ The report indicated that

²⁶Emil Brunner, Justice and the Social Order (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), p. 7, cited in Duff, p. 297.

²⁷Duff, p. 298.

²⁸Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 115.

justice "involves continuous effort to overcome those economic disadvantages which are a grievous human burden and which are incompatible with equal opportunity," and that it requires the formation of humane, participatory institutions which provide legal protection against the arbitrary use of power.²⁹

In 1956 the Division of Studies convened a regional study conference at Arnoldshain, Germany, for North American and European delegates to address the theme of "The Responsible Society in National and International Affairs." Of particular interest for the present study was a statement from the report which concluded that³⁰

the big problem for Christians in a time of such great change may be to avoid a "Christian" social ideology, that is expressing in a too definite and universal way what is the meaning of Christian justice and freedom.

This fear of becoming too "Christian" and too rigid appeared frequently in World Council reports during this period along with corresponding reminders of the need to be flexible. These concerns provide a clear reason for the avoidance of specific or detailed explorations of justice in Council discussions.

²⁹Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 115. Over the years justice and participation were linked in a variety of ways as we shall see more fully below.

³⁰The Arnoldshain Report 1956, p. 16.

Thessalonica, Greece, was chosen as the site for the summary conference of the Rapid Social Change study held in 1959. A wide range of issues was addressed under four major headings: cultural change; political action; economic development; and, community development in rural and urban areas.³¹ The report of the conference recalled the promise of improvement in the standard of living held out by rapid social change and indicated that this was accompanied by³²

the promise of greater justice and larger freedom-justice in the fairer distribution of goods and services and in the provision of opportunities for human development, and freedom for a fuller life.

Further on the report directed attention to the need to recognize the difference between justice and charity, but it did not go beyond asserting that justice demands dealing with the factors which make charitable giving necessary.³³ Once again three of the familiar principles related to justice in ecumenical discussion had been recited: fair distribution; availability of opportunity; and, the need to move beyond charity.

³¹Thessalonica (1959), "Table of Contents."

³²Thessalonica (1959), pp. 7-8.

³³Thessalonica (1959), p. 74.

New Delhi to Uppsala: An Emphasis on Information

One result of the Rapid Social Change Study was the inclusion in the report of the section on Service at the New Delhi Assembly of a number of issues dealing with technology and the effects of rapid change on developing nations. The introduction to the report contained the affirmation that "justice is the expression of [God's] love in the structures of society,"³⁴ reaffirming the principle that justice does transcend harmonious relationships. In discussing international institutions and the failure to move toward a more just world order the report concluded that a major impediment was the "absence of a commonly agreed interpretation of law and justice."³⁵ Churches were challenged to identify points of agreement on law and justice between the major powers as a starting point.³⁶

The World Conference on Church and Society, held at Geneva in 1966, and addressing the theme of "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time," was a major event in the ecumenical dialogue

³⁴Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 93.

³⁵Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 107.

³⁶Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 107. The report provided no clear insight into the nature, meaning or application of a concept of justice.

on social issues. Adhering to the principle enunciated at Stockholm in 1925 and reaffirmed by subsequent gatherings the Geneva report once again set "'the human' as a criterion for judging economic and social change."³⁷

Overtures to the development of a theory of justice appeared in two separate locations in the report. The first of these was in conjunction with a discussion of the theological basis of law.³⁸ Although the discussion at this point was primarily concerned with developing a sound doctrine of law it cited three reference points for defining more clearly "all appeals to a natural law of justice."³⁹ These included the relation of persons to: (1) creation and the Creator; (2) Christ the Redeemer, as example; and, (3) the Holy Spirit, as guide and enabler.⁴⁰ Reflecting again the criterion of the human, the report stated that "Christians find in the idea of the person-in-community the integral focus of all questions of freedom,

³⁷ Geneva (1966), p. 52. In 1968 the World Council felt the need to launch a major study on the meaning of the human entitled "The Humanum Inquiry."

³⁸ Geneva (1966), pp. 104-106. Such an inquiry was not without precedent in World Council Discussions. See "The Church and International Law," Ecumenical Review, III, 1 (October 1950), 67-70.

³⁹ Geneva (1966), p. 104.

⁴⁰ Geneva (1966), p. 104.

justice, peace and equality."⁴¹ While this discussion fell far short of a coherent theory of justice, it did state dimensions of the basis for such a theory: natural law; revelation; and, the primacy of the human in community.⁴²

The second discussion related to the development of a concept of justice appeared in the report of the working group on "Theological Issues in Social Ethics":⁴³

The discernment by Christians of what is just and unjust, human and inhuman, in the complexities of political and economic change, is a discipline exercised in continual dialogue with biblical resources, the mind of the Church through history and today and the best insights of social scientific analysis. But it remains a discipline which aims not at a theoretical system of truth, but action in human society. Its object is [is] not simply to understand the world but to respond to the power of God which is recreating it.

Here the determination of the just, and note once again the close association with the human, was described as a process informed by the Bible, tradition, current religious reflection, and contemporary secular information and interpretation. The concern and emphasis was on action not theory. In effect the report asserted that no theory of justice would be, or need be developed

⁴¹Geneva (1966), p. 104.

⁴²The report indicated that while it had been possible to secure agreement on the general outline described above a number of "unresolved issues" remained, ten of which were listed.

⁴³Geneva (1966), p. 201.

because what really matters is to discover what God is doing in each situation and then act in accordance with that divine creativity. The report continued with the proposition that if a person acts in accordance with what he or she believes to be God's command that such sincere seeking and acting will open the individual to "the correction of God out of his experience."⁴⁴

Outside of the general categories just listed the report provided no further insight into what criteria, from the Christian perspective, might guide the choice of action. Hans-Heinrich Wolf concluded in his analysis of this passage that:⁴⁵

In ecumenical discussions concerning criteria everything has become more fluid and more dynamic; problems are looked at in their practical contemporary context and in the context of that divine action which is our endeavour to discern.

This stance represented an emphasis on an inductive approach which appeared to deny the existence of any uniform presuppositions to guide: (a) the selection of situations to be considered; and, (b) the evaluation of and response to those situations. Wolf recalled the familiar themes of love and hope and cited the Geneva affirmation that, in particular situations, "love must be expressed within

⁴⁴Geneva (1966), p. 202.

⁴⁵Hans-Heinrich Wolf, "Towards an Ecumenical Consensus," in Preston, p. 435.

the framework and structures of justice."⁴⁶ Neither Wolf nor the Geneva report, however, provided any clear interpretation of what the nature of the framework and structures of justice might look like.

Charles West, in his analysis of the Geneva report, advanced the discussion with his observations on the role of ideology in ethical decision making. Observing that most ecumenical documents set a tone focused on "the level of moral exhortation and a plea for the broad use of reason rather than an analysis of the ways of God's judgement and redemption," he proposed the formation of an avowedly Christian ideology.⁴⁷ Two basic dimensions of ideological reflection were posited: (a) belief in "the truth of one's analysis and predictions as reflecting the implications of ultimate reality for action now"; and, (b) that the commitment to such analysis and action involves risk due to the relativity of the ideology in relation to the interests and perspective of those holding it, and yet the necessity of acting on it.⁴⁸ West then indicated that such a position results in an

⁴⁶Wolf, p. 435.

⁴⁷Charles C. West, "Status Quo, Evolution or Revolution?" in Preston, p. 388.

⁴⁸West, p. 390.

awareness within the Christian that there is no abstract truth but "a relation with the reality which claims his allegiance"; that there is only "transforming truth which makes the world new"; and, that Christian witness in this context becomes a dialogue with those who believe differently.⁴⁹ Christianity thus would propose its own ideology to compete among others. While it may make certain claims to uniqueness, it may make no absolute claims. Tests of validity would be posited in the transformations achieved by action.

West followed his discussion of the relation of ideology to Christian belief with the statement that "this [the framework just outlined] sets the pattern for the discovery and realization of justice and peace in and through the social change whose author and finisher is finally the triune God."⁵⁰ He then proceeded to illustrate the process described "with reference to that much misused word 'justice'."⁵¹ His concept was developed out of the biblical context and was given three basic characteristics: (1) "a power-the ability to prevail, to fulfill one's nature in action, to be a respected successful

⁴⁹West, pp. 390-391.

⁵⁰West, p. 391.

⁵¹West, p. 391.

person and to be innocent of distortions of the inner character or outer fortune"; (2) a relationship reflecting mutual affirmation; and, (3) a dynamic partiality for the poor and oppressed.⁵²

Both Wolf and West accepted the task of buttressing the ecumenical rejection of universal social structures designed by the Church; Christianity may provide insight, but it must not offer blueprints. West's analysis of the Geneva report and his familiarity with other ecumenical discussions led him to declare the need for the articulation of a clearer statement of a Christian perspective, or ideology, vis-a-vis contemporary social problems; and, to identify the need to define justice as the starting point for shaping that ideology.

Related to this perspective was the assertion at the Geneva Conference that "in order that the churches may make critical social and technical judgments in a Christian perspective, the first essential is a knowledge of the facts."⁵³ The concern for accurate information upon which to base statements and positions had characterized the ecumenical movement from early in the century. The Geneva report repeatedly reflected the input of informed

⁵²West, p. 391.

⁵³Geneva (1966), p. 144.

sociological, political and economic research. Lacking was a coherent Christian perspective, or ethic, or concept of justice which would facilitate the interpretation of those facts in the churches so that the facts might guide a response and speak to people who knew that they must respond.⁵⁴

Questions were raised at, and after, Geneva concerning the adequacy of the consideration of theological issues at that meeting. The consultation held at Zagorsk in 1968 was sponsored jointly by Church and Society and Faith and Order in response to the queries arising from the 1966 Geneva Conference. The Zagorsk meeting proposed the use of the method of dialectical interaction which would combine the methods of inductive and deductive ethical analysis.⁵⁵ A proclivity for the inductive approach had characterized a number of Church and Society reports. Repeated refusals to articulate some of the basic Christian presuppositions guiding the approach to contemporary problems resulted in: (1) a feeling that those who professed an open approach to contemporary

⁵⁴To continue to call for more factual information about particular situations could not compensate for the lack of the first essential necessary to enable to churches to make critical social and ethical decisions; a reasoned, informed, coherent Christian perspective.

⁵⁵See Chapter Two above.

issues, free from theological and ethical principles and prejudice, were not being honest with themselves or with those to whom the reports were being addressed. (2) Frequent ambiguity in the reports when appeals were made to concepts such as justice, freedom and rights. (3) Detailed problem analyses and suggested techniques and methods of response which were supported, if at all, with only vague and general moral exhortations.

The Uppsala Assembly reflected the strong influence of the 1966 Geneva Conference, entitling the section on social issues "World Economic and Social Development." The report of that section voiced repeated appeals to justice, social justice, economic justice and distributive justice.⁵⁶ Likewise, the report of the Committee on Church and Society spoke of needs and crises in various forms of justice,⁵⁷ but neither report offered any development of the meaning of or motivating force behind justice.

THE FUTURUM INQUIRY

Concern about the meaning of justice and its implications for shaping society were voiced in the

⁵⁶Official Report, 4th Assembly, pp. 45-55.

⁵⁷Official Report, 4th Assembly, pp. 240-245.

formative stages of the Futurum inquiry. The Prospectus describing the scope of the program spoke of "the establishment of national and international structures of justice so as to relate technical possibilities to the social aspirations of mankind," as one of the major problems for possible consideration.⁵⁸ Under the title "The Problem of Social Justice in Future Perspective" seven areas of inquiry were listed as "among the political-economic issues to be explored."⁵⁹ In the section on theological and ethical questions "the meaning of justice in a technological age," and issues of human rights and freedoms were listed as areas requiring careful theological reflection.⁶⁰ It was also asserted that to facilitate the evaluation of technical developments⁶¹

one of the objectives of this inquiry would be to clarify the ethical options and the religious and secular criteria by which choices are made among various possibilities offered by technical change.

Thus, justice initially occupied a primary role in the conception of the Futurum project. Social justice was implicitly related to concern with "political-economic" issues. Present, also, was the awareness of the need to

⁵⁸Futurum Prospectus, p. 5.

⁵⁹Futurum Prospectus, p. 6.

⁶⁰Futurum Prospectus, p. 7.

⁶¹Futurum Prospectus, pp. 7-8.

define the meaning of justice and to identify and clarify criteria for evaluating technological change.

An Uncertain Beginning

The Futurum Study was formally initiated by an exploratory conference on "Technology, Faith and the Future of Man" which met at Geneva in mid-1970. A major objective of the conference was to bring together persons from the theological, social, scientific and technological disciplines to identify areas of focus for the study. The report on the conference provided no indication that the concept of justice was in any significant way appealed to or addressed by the meeting.⁶² It did, however, record a certain tension between members of the scientific community who were looking for some clear direction and insight from the theologians, who often appeared vague and apprehensive.⁶³ The basic nature of this problem was summarized with the observation that⁶⁴

the irony was that the scientists' new readiness to take seriously the affirmations of theology had appeared precisely when theologians seemed to have become extremely reluctant to make distinctive affirmations of their own.

⁶²Geneva (1970), pp. 1-111.

⁶³Geneva (1970), p. 87.

⁶⁴Geneva (1970), p. 87.

A somewhat harsher assessment was provided in an outside report on the conference which concluded: "The religionists tend to float about in generalities. They seem unsure even of the principles they want to apply."⁶⁵

Increase for the Poor, Reduction for the Rich

In June, 1970, an expanded meeting of the Working Committee on Church and Society met at Nemi, Italy, to plan the next steps in the Futurum inquiry. "Social Justice, Environment, Population and the Quality of Life" was the title given to the first section of the report from the group working on political and economic choices in a technological era.⁶⁶ Three basic observations about justice were presented. The first indicated that "justice and human dignity require increased economic and technological development among some people in the world and among particular groups within nations,"⁶⁷ reviving memories of a similar call sounded at the Amsterdam Assembly.

⁶⁵"The Man of Excellent Intention," Technology Review, (October/November 1970), cited in "A Summary of Post-Conference Press Comments," Anticipation, No. 5 (December 1970), 30.

⁶⁶Nemi (1971), p. 12.

⁶⁷Nemi (1971), p. 12.

Secondly, in light of the debate concerning zero growth which was surfacing at that time the report asserted that if the no-growth advocates were correct "justice will require wealthy societies to moderate, halt, or even reverse their rates of consumption and pollution in order that other societies may accelerate economic growth"; and, thirdly, that even if the no-growth hypothesis proved untrue "economic growth alone, without redistribution of power and resources will not bring justice."⁶⁸ Once again justice had been invoked in relation to distribution of technology, resources, political power and economic participation.

The concern over the absence of any clear definition of justice reappeared at Nemi in the report of the group that had dealt with "Images of the Future." After expressing his disappointment over the groups failure to provide any insight into an image of the future informed by the Christian faith, Charles West concluded that such a task could begin in the working out of a meaningful definition of justice: "Traditionally this dynamic ideal [new forms of creative society] has been called justice. It has never been adequately defined for all the volumes written on it. We might well turn to the task again."⁶⁹

⁶⁸Nemi (1971), p. 12.

⁶⁹Nemi (1971), p. 24.

Judging from the report of the follow-up consultation to the Nemi meeting held just over a year later at Cardiff, Wales, West's plea, if not unheard, had certainly gone unheeded. The report of this consultation on "Global Environment, Economic Growth and Social Justice" not only failed to provide any definition of justice, but also omitted any direct references to justice.⁷⁰

"Dialectical Interaction" Affirmed

In July of 1973 a small working party on science and technology met in Zurich and produced "A Theological Critique of Scientific Rationality." Whereas the Cardiff report had reflected basically a humanistic rational, the Zurich group attempted to state "particular Christian bases" for judgements on technology, science and society.⁷¹ The ecumenical position of the conditional nature of theological statements on questions related to science and technology was reaffirmed, but the general tone of the first section of the report represented a reprise of the

⁷⁰Cardiff (1972), pp. 3-11.

⁷¹Zurich (1973), p. 2. The report, divided into three sections-"The Relation of Theology to Ethical Decision Making," "Quality of Life-Criteria for Measurement," and, "Nature, Social Justice and the Eschatological Future"-presented a variety of opinions voiced in the discussions, rather than a consensus. (p. 2)

principle of dialectical interaction: The Christian does not confront current social questions and visions of the future, as it were, empty handed. Rather, there are insights provided by the faith which can guide, but which do not predetermine, decisions. The position was summarized with the statement that:⁷²

In all examples the warning and the duty both remain: always be prepared to question the finality of theological judgements, but never hesitate to make them, with the best Christian insight and sensitivity possible.

Thus, while the working party provided no further insight into the meaning of justice, they did reaffirm the validity and necessity for Christians of principles drawn from the faith which could, in dialogue with contemporary conditions, guide and inform present discussions and future expectations.

Regional Perspectives

During the course of the Futurum study three regional consultations were convened. The first of these, held at Accra in March, 1972, drew participants from West Africa together to consider the theme "Science, Technology and the Future of Man and Society."⁷³ Social justice was

⁷²Zurich (1973), p. 3.

⁷³Accra (1972) pp. 341-347.

mentioned in the title of the first section of the conference report, although no definition was offered and no specific references to the concept appeared. Section II dealt with the question of ideological and social perspectives needed to make effective use of science and technology in Africa.⁷⁴ It was there, in relation to the development of the ideology of self-reliance, that a number of the concepts related to justice in previous World Council discussions appeared:⁷⁵

Self-reliance means that every body has the basic necessities of life and work-good food, housing, education, etc.-and works for his living without exploiting others or being a parasite on them. The self-reliant individual must be aware of the political objectives and social goals of the society. In a self-reliant society every citizen has equal opportunities and equal access to all the resources of the nation; exploitation of man by man is forbidden; and every citizen participates in all social, political and economic institutions. This is consistent with the teaching of the Church about society and the place of man within it.

The claims for access to all resources and involvement in all institutions in society appeared exaggerated. Nevertheless, the report did define significant dimensions of what society should look like, and then asserted the relationship of that vision to Christian thought.

⁷⁴Accra (1972), pp. 341-343.

⁷⁵Accra (1972), p. 343.

The Asian regional consultation met at Kuala Lumpur in April of 1973, and addressed the theme of "The Scientific, Technological and Social Revolutions in Asian Perspective."⁷⁶ The conference made a number of assertions concerning justice among the most notable of which was the observation that "radical and fundamental" change is a necessary corollary of justice in the Asian context.⁷⁷ A glimpse into the meaning of a just society was provided in the concluding section of the report where "a just and responsible society" was listed as one of the things about which every society should be concerned.⁷⁸ This was defined as⁷⁹

a society free from domination of one social group or class by another, and where there is participation by all in the decision-making process. It means developing a society based on a system of just law.

Pont-a-Mousson, France, provided the location for the North American-European regional conference on "The Technological Future of the Industrialized Nations and the Quality of Life."⁸⁰ Two separate, but brief, concepts of justice were presented in the conference report. The first of these was appended, in what appeared to be an

⁷⁶Kuala Lumpur (1973) pp. 30-36.

⁷⁷Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 30.

⁷⁸Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 36.

⁷⁹Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 36

⁸⁰Pont-a-Mousson (1973), pp. 2-16.

afterthought, to the section of the report which addressed the need for a global perspective and called for the serious consideration of the challenge of the "two-thirds" world.⁸¹

The moral principle of justice must have priority. Justice means neither a "principle of merit", i.e. distribution in proportion to a certain meritorious behavior (intelligence, thrift), nor a "principle of objective equality", i.e. a distribution where by everyone attains an exactly equal amount of good life. It means a principle of needs, i.e. a distribution where by all people are accorded an equal means of realizing a maximum good in their lives in relation to their capacities and particular requirements. This principle should be a criterion both for our planning of technology and for production in our societies. Our production does not promote justice when its aim is to satisfy our wants (cars, color TV's, and other luxury goods) while at the same time the most basic needs of great numbers of people in the world are not satisfied.

That justice was conceived of as a distributive principle was given three fold endorsement. All persons, by virtue of their humanity, are entitled to attain an undefined "maximum good" which is to be allotted in an unspecified way according to their "capacities and particular requirements." What was meant by these latter categories and what leverage they might exercise in establishing that to which a person may aspire was not clarified. Neither was it clear what was meant by "equal means," although it

⁸¹Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 11.

appeared that equality of opportunity was implied.⁸²

Such a principle of distributive justice would need both amplification and clarification before it could be effectively applied, and its source of authority would need articulation.

The discussion of theological issues at Pont-a-Mousson reflected an inability to reach consensus and thus summaries of varying perspectives were offered. Three different stances were suggested as possible starting points to guide Christian decision making in relation to questions concerning technology and science. The first alternative could be characterized as the participation model. Emphasis in that approach was placed on stimulating the involvement of as many people from every spectrum of society as possible in order to achieve proper decisions about economic, technological, social and political matters.⁸³ Efforts to provide education and information to guide wise decisions were permitted, but no attempt was to be made to reason from ethical principles, which were held to be the province of experts.⁸⁴

⁸²Although no origin was stated for this concept there was a parallel with the third dimension of justice outlined at Oxford in 1937. See above.

⁸³Pont-a-Mousson, (1973), p. 13.

⁸⁴Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 14. It appeared that the critique leveled at the inductive approach at Zagorsk had not been totally convincing.

The second stance could be described as the withdrawal model. Reminiscent of the counter culture movements, this approach suggested that the best response to the domination of society by technology was to remove oneself from the mainstream of technological life and explore more creative and simpler modes of living.⁸⁵

The third position could be described as a dialectical interaction model. Such an approach would be guided by stated theological-ethical principles formulated in dialogue with the social technological context.⁸⁶ These guiding principles would not be absolute. Rather, they would attempt to reflect a resonance with God's creative will and work in the world. The first example of what such a principle might be provided the second description of justice included in the report.⁸⁷

A basic criterion of the worth of any technology should be how far it serves to realize justice among human beings, in the Biblical sense of that word: to bring to the poor, the disadvantaged, the oppressed a new and freer life. This in fact is the action of God. He raises up the poor and blesses them. He vindicates their cause. He brings them into the

⁸⁵Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 14.

⁸⁶Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 14.

⁸⁷Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 14. Charles West was present at Pont-a-Mousson. It would seem that the plea he had raised at Nemi had at last received passing attention. This description of justice paralleled West's cited above.

community of free and equal persons, and empowers them to take part in it. The test of any technology is its service to this justice, this liberation, this empowerment. We have in mind here the poor, the migrants, the racial and national minorities in our several industrialized countries, but even more the great majority of people in other countries who do not participate in the power and prosperity which we enjoy. A technology that merely benefits the already affluent has little human value.

This treatment of justice provided a number of identifiable elements: (1) Justice is a bias in favor of the poor and oppressed; (2) God is the author of justice and those who profess God must take it seriously; (3) in application, technologies which relieve the poor and oppressed and enable fuller and freer participation in life were affirmed; (4) not only technologies which contribute directly to the oppression of the poor, but also those which aid only the affluent were condemned.⁸⁸

Consolidation and Expansion

The summary conference held at Bucharest in June, 1974, provided the most detailed treatment of justice

⁸⁸This concept as presented in the report left certain questions unanswered. There are instances when the comparatively affluent may suffer oppression, such as imprisonment or harassment for advocacy of certain causes or beliefs; did this concept of justice encompass them? Certain technologies such as hemodialysis and open heart surgery are currently available only to the relatively affluent; are they, nevertheless, of "little human value?". Some questions related to these would receive attention in the studies connected with the JPSS emphasis.

during the Futurum inquiry. Those discussions were noteworthy, not so much for significantly new contributions to the concept of justice, but in that they consolidated certain topics which had figured prominently in the Futurum study in relation to justice. Five emphases emerged in the conference report as the participants considered what the Christian faith could say about justice in the contemporary context. The first of these echoed and broadened the principle set forth at Pont-a-Mousson by asserting that⁸⁹

Justice expresses God's affirmation of the poor, the weak, the disadvantaged, the liberation of the oppressed and the fulfillment of those who are submitted to injustice and excluded from a full place in the community of human hope and responsibility.

While the accomplishment of this first principle was attributed to God, the second clearly implied that justice is also a principle of engagement when it asserted that justice requires the support of struggles for liberation and the sharing of God's gifts of power and wealth producing capacity.⁹⁰ A theme harking back as far as Stockholm 1925 was reaffirmed in the third proposition: "a Christian understanding of justice subordinates material

⁸⁹ Bucharest (1974), p. 24.

⁹⁰ Bucharest (1974), p. 24.

prosperity to the quality of human life."⁹¹ The fourth emphasis related justice to God's judgement and mercy which confronts persons with the consequences of their disobedience, invoking the principle of just deserts; while the fifth focused on God's activity in providing hope and possibilities to change relationships and to renew the world.⁹²

One significantly new dimension was added to the concept of justice at Bucharest. Reflecting the ongoing debate within the Futurum study over the basic nature of the created order and the place of humanity in it and humanities relation to it,⁹³ the report concluded that "justice means awareness of the authentic interdependence of people and of people with their environment;" and, even more emphatically, justice "includes nature as well as society."⁹⁴ This extension of justice to nature implied that nature has certain inherent rights which must be respected. Up to this point in ecumenical discussions justice had been considered solely in terms of human

⁹¹Bucharest (1974), p. 24. See also Appendix A.

⁹²Bucharest (1974), p. 24. These last two elements were directed particularly, although not exclusively, to the affluent.

⁹³This debate will be examined in Chapter 5 below.

⁹⁴Bucharest (1974), p. 5, emphasis supplied.

rights and needs, and was often equated with what is "human."⁹⁵ Although the interpretation of justice and its application continued to emphasize the human, a new dimension had been added.

Bucharest made its own contribution to the long standing debate on justice and freedom, declaring that "without justice, freedom becomes arbitrariness, without freedom justice becomes tyrannical."⁹⁶ The two principles were cast as necessary checks on each other.

The dimensions of justice set forth at Bucharest were from and based upon a Christian understanding of God and God's relation to creation. This grounding provided a context for references and appeals to justice. Thus, when it was stated that the benefits of economic growth should first and foremost, go to the poor, it was evident that this conclusion was based upon the first principle enumerated in the discussion of justice. Likewise, the second principle was reflected in the assertion that the choices available in the market place should be restricted

⁹⁵See the discussion above, particularly in relation to the 1966 Geneva Conference, e.g. Geneva (1966), p. 20.

In the sixties and seventies this emphasis appeared to reinforce the humanistic approach which rejected religious principles and expressed deep confidence in popular participation to produce the good.

⁹⁶Bucharest (1974), p. 25.

in order to free resources for use in meeting basic human needs. This report possessed a greater degrees of internal consistency and integrity than many of its predecessors: referents existed to give meaning to assertions made by the conference.

Evidence that there was not unanimous agreement on the application of the concept of justice presented, nor in some respects on the definition, appeared in the report. In discussing the "responsibility of affluent societies for world social justice" sharp differences emerged which required the inclusion of two views in the final report. The first of these, "the need for radically new goals for over developed societies," followed closely the definition of justice contained in the report and indicated that major value and structure changes would be required within affluent societies to enable the realization of justice.⁹⁷ The second view, "facing the obstacles in restructuring the affluent societies," cited the benefits that the existing affluent system had brought to millions of people and equated the continued development of the world economy with the realization of social justice.⁹⁸ Questions were raised about the injustice that

⁹⁷ Bucharest (1974), pp. 29-30.

⁹⁸ Bucharest (1974). p. 31.

may result to certain groups in affluent societies who will be disproportionately effected by modifications in production patterns, e.g. auto workers who might lose their jobs.⁹⁹

On the one hand, this second point of view interpreted the application, and at points the content, of the concept of justice somewhat differently from the first one. Part of that disagreement can, however, be traced to a different reading of the world situation existing economic structures may not be perfect, but look at all the good they have produced. On the other hand, the second perspective added dimensions to the consideration of justice not clearly included in the original definition: the possibility of manipulation and displacement of persons in affluent societies in the process of seeking improved conditions and greater participation for the poor. Justice is not achieved for one group by oppressing another.

The report did leave certain matters unclear:
(1) Do advocates of both views affirm the definition of justice? If the answer is yes, then the difference is one of application of the concept. (2) The second viewpoint does not appear to affirm a total bias in favor

⁹⁹Bucharest (1974), p. 31.

of the poor. If one interprets justice as a bias for the poor does this then allow coercion and oppression of the affluent to achieve better conditions for the poor? (3) What does justice mean for the affluent? vis-a-vis the poor; vis-a-vis each other?

Part six of the report, dealing with theological understandings of nature and humanity provided its own image of justice by appealing to the trinity. Citing the trinity as a model of diversity and equality it declared that "the human community is called to act on the analogy of this trinitarian life and thus to realize justice, acknowledging the diversity and equality of all people."¹⁰⁰

An Opportunity Lost

It must be remembered that the Futurum inquiry was a study program organized by the sub-unit on Church and Society. As such it facilitated dialogue among a core group of theologians, ethicists, scientists, technologists, business people and a limited number of pastors and church bureaucrats. The product of those dialogues was shared with a larger constituency primarily through the periodical Anticipation. To that extent the study helped to stimulate the thinking of the churches, but it

¹⁰⁰Bucharest (1974), p. 35.

did not represent the voice of the World Council.

One test of its impact was to be the degree to which the Nairobi Assembly would adopt and reflect its thought. In terms of providing a concept of justice which could guide World Council reflection the Nairobi Assembly failed to utilize the resources which had been generated.¹⁰¹ The introduction to the report of Section VI included "God's permanent demand for justice to restore all broken relations" as one of the five reasons given for the church's involvement in society,¹⁰² recalling the first dimension of justice set forth at Oxford. The Nairobi description concluded with an affirmation of the primacy of the poor and the oppressed.¹⁰³ While more comprehensive understandings of justice had emerged during the period between Uppsala and Nairobi, the Fifth Assembly limited its treatment to these two dimensions.

SUMMARY

During the first fifty years of the modern ecumenical movement, 1925-1975, appeals to and invocations of

¹⁰¹As will be seen in Chapter 6, however, the concept of sustainability was affirmed by the Assembly.

¹⁰²Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 121.

¹⁰³Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 121.

justice played an increasing role in the discussions and reports of ecumenical conferences. At its inception the ecumenical movement had accepted as its primary tasks the generation and gathering of accurate information on vital social issues and the stimulation of the discussion of those issues within and between churches. The World Council of Churches moved increasingly beyond the stimulation of discussion towards a position of advocacy in certain areas of social concern. There is a qualitative difference between nurturing discussions of justice and declaring what "justice demands" in relation to a contemporary situation. In the former approach ambiguity is not crucial and may be beneficial. Advocacy, however, requires clarity of premise and fact. During the period under consideration no comprehensive articulation of a concept of justice emerged to guide or interpret World Council statements on social issues. This failure was both noticed and decried by various participants in the ecumenical dialogues.

Over the years, however, the following dimensions and interpretations of justice appeared. At no point were all of them ever cited simultaneously by one conference or assembly. Rather, they provide a summary of the various "meanings" attributed to justice in official ecumenical discussion.

(1) Relational harmony: Originally this principle referred to the harmonious relation of life to life. More recently the dynamic relation of human to non-human life has been included.

(2) Definition and realization of the good: This responsibility was attributed to justice with the condition of the accompanying assessment of rightful place and duty, or in relation to capacities and personal requirements.

(3) Love: Justice was seen as a relative manifestation of this normative principle. Some discussions emphasized justice as love embodied in structures.

(4) Fair distribution: This concept originally focused on material goods, but came increasingly to include concern with political and economic power as well.

(5) Equality of opportunity: Often accompanied by a rejection of any notion of equality of ability, this principle affirmed the right of persons to a chance to develop their God given potential.

(6) Bias in favor of the poor and oppressed: Justice in this instance emphasized the primacy of the needs and rights of the poor and oppressed. At times this was accompanied by the assertion that identification with and engagement in the struggles of these people is part of the nature of justice.

(7) The subordination of economic processes and prosperity to concern for the quality of life.

(8) Just deserts: Affirmation of the principle that justice is reflected when persons suffer the consequences of their actions which run contrary to divine purpose and intention.

Early on it was established that the ecumenical movement would not provide absolute, abstract rules for the structuring of society. This position was pressed further in the mid-fifties when World Council conferences began to exhibit a reluctance to state or appeal to any Christian principles as a guide for ethical decision making. A subtle but significant difference exists between the earlier distinction of refusing to define a Christian blueprint for society, and the later position which resisted any appeal to specifically Christian principles to guide reflection.

The three options presented at Pont-a-Mousson in effect summarized the basic approaches which had figured prominently in Church and Society discussions over the years. Oxford was noted for the proposal of middle-axioms to guide ethical decision making, but as early as 1956 at Arnoldshain, a proclivity for the participation model, an approach which was rooted in a humanistic rationale, emerged in conjunction with the caution that Christians

must not formulate an ideology based on their own faith and traditions to guide their decisions on present and future social questions.

Advocates of the withdrawal model had their greatest influence at the working group meeting held at Nemi in 1971. This, of course, coincided with the apex of the counter-culture movements in affluent societies in the late sixties and early seventies. S.L. Parmar felt that the counter-culture mentality had so strongly influenced the Nemi report on ideologies for the future to the point of slighting Third World perspectives that he was moved to submit a written addendum voicing his concern.¹⁰⁴

Finally, as the Futurum study drew to a close, the reemergence occurred of a position advocating the application of basic Christian positions to contemporary social and technological questions. Christian principles concerning creation and the nature, meaning and goals of human life could now be used to shape images of future social organization and technical applications. These principles were not to be applied in abstract or absolute fashion, but were to guide Christian decisions through their dialogue with the best information available on

¹⁰⁴Nemi (1971), p. 23.

present conditions and future possibilities. Thus a shift occurred over the years from the outright rejection of any Christian ideology to calls for and attempts to define elements of an ideology to shape present actions and visions of the future guided by Christian images of what creative life is. Dialectical interaction was the name given this process.

A similar trend appeared over time in the authority and origins cited to undergird interpretations of justice. Four basic categories emerged: (1) natural law; (2) revelation (Bible and tradition); (3) the human in community; and (4) contemporary information on society. Increasing hope and confidence was placed in social, scientific and technical experts within Church and Society discussions. Repeated calls for more and better facts and figures were voiced while a dearth of principles, ethical criteria and theological direction prevailed. In the course of the Futurum study increased attention was given to theological and ethical reflection while the concern for accurate information was maintained.

Within Church and Society discussions, the end of the period under consideration witnessed a renewed willingness on the part of some participants to articulate general Christian principles to aid decision making on technical, scientific and social questions. At Burcharest this resulted in the elaboration of dimensions of a theory

of justice based on Christian perspectives. Very little of this material was adopted by the Nairobi Assembly, however, so that the World Council as a whole remained without a stated concept of justice to guide or interpret its pronouncements on social issues.¹⁰⁵

Even when a definition of justice was presented and apparently agreed upon by a conference the difficulties were by no means ended. The problems appearing at Bucharest over varying interpretations of the definition and application of justice among the affluent give rise to some issues of a broader nature related to ecumenical discussions in general and the response of local congregations to positions defined at ecumenical meetings.

(1) Often it is not clear what degree of agreement supports a position such as the definition of justice emerging from Bucharest.

(2) Even if a position receives the unanimous support of those present the case may be quite different in the church at large.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵In his doctoral dissertation on economics and the quality of life, Martti Lindqvist concluded that "the quality of life and the principle of justice have afforded two fundamental viewpoints in approaching and evaluating the basic themes of the Futurum study." This assertion must be evaluated in light of the fact that no comprehensive theory of justice was developed in the course of the study, and the clearest attempts at defining a concept of justice appeared only at the concluding conference in 1974. See Lindqvist, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶See the discussion of the Zagorsk Consultation in Chapter 2 above.

(3) A definition upon which all present agree still may be interpreted and applied in radically different ways by the participants in the meeting and by the constituent churches and their members.

One consistent emphasis throughout the fifty year period was a focus on the structural nature of justice. Meagre attention was given in the ecumenical discussions under consideration to the nature and nurture of "the just man" and his role in and relation to a just society. Repeated concerns were expressed about unjust systems and the need to create, through revolutionary or evolutionary means, more just structures and systems.

The understanding of the relation between freedom and justice has been modified with the passage of time within the World Council. The varying positions may be summarized as follows in chronological order:

(1) Concentrated effort is needed to discover ways and systems which will prevent justice and freedom from destroying each other.

(2) The realization of freedom is a part of justice.

(3) Justice and freedom exist side by side, each with its own contribution to make to the realization of human life and dignity.

(4) Justice and freedom share a relationship characterized by a dynamic tension, and dependence of each on the other.

Movement at the close of the Futurum study was in the direction of articulating some dimensions of justice. The concept was neither fully developed nor generally agreed upon, yet it would be yoked with the new concept of sustainability to form the focus of further ecumenical discussion.

Chapter 4

PARTICIPATION

The modern ecumenical movement grew, in part, out of a deep conviction that the churches and their members should be challenged and enabled to participate creatively and effectively in addressing social issues from Christian perspectives. In the ensuing years this concern for the involvement of persons in decisions and processes effecting their immediate lives as well as national and international policies was broadened and strengthened.

This chapter will trace the development of the concept of participation in ecumenical discussion. As in the discussion of justice in Chapter 3, the primary concern is to explore the meaning and essence of concepts of participation which have been explicitly stated or which have emerged. Efforts will also be made to identify the rationale for advocating a particular type of participation. For example, if broad community involvement was advocated in making decisions concerning the use of nuclear power generation, was any indication given of why this type of process was deemed "better," more reliable and accurate or more right than allowing knowledgeable technical and financial experts to decide for the community if, when and where such installations should occur.

The focus of the present chapter is not upon "methods" of participation, i.e., civil disobedience versus lobbying or increased voter activity. Rather, this inquiry is guided by the following considerations: (1) Who are the participants? Does the concept of participation emphasize individual or corporate or collective activity? Is a particular category of persons or groups emphasized? (2) What categories of participation appear? Do persons or groups act in consistently identifiable ways in relation to others? (3) Are any indications given of what commends or compels this type of participation?

The question of the participation of Christians in violent revolution has evoked much discussion in ecumenical circles. In recent years the cash contributions of the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council to revolutionary groups has caused heated debate and dissension within and outside the Council. Both of these issues require continued serious analysis, but both lie beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

THE EARLY YEARS 1925-1948

Participation in Dialogue

Although the concept of participation was not addressed directly or developed in detail in the early ecumenical discussions, dimensions of concern about the

involvement of persons in social, political and economic issues clearly emerged. The message of the 1925 Stockholm Conference voiced its concern over the need to engage as many churches and Christians as possible in the ecumenical dialogue about social issues.¹ Seeking to significantly expand the discussions to include a broad range of society the conference affirmed that "now we have many allies in this holy cause" and encouraged the involvement of youth and all who seek truth as essential participants in the process of addressing social problems.²

Sharing the Wealth

The 1928 International Missionary Council Conference at Jerusalem gave attention to some dimensions of a "Christian" society. Such a society would assure that all its members had access to the material and ethical conditions essential to spiritual growth as a response to the New Testament teaching on brotherhood.³ Witnessed here was a preliminary form of a principle which would be often repeated and expanded in ecumenical discussions--persons have the right to a share of the basic material requirements

¹Stockholm (1925), p. 174.

²Stockholm (1925), p. 174.

³Jerusalem (1928), p. 9.

necessary for human existence and growth. Whether persons should expect to participate not only in the sharing of material resources, but also to participate fully in the economic and political processes governing the generation and distribution of resources would be more fully discussed by future ecumenical gatherings. The Jerusalem report did, however, assert that "the development of the economic resources of backward countries" should be overseen by governing bodies patterned on the public utility model in which nationals would participate.⁴ Nevertheless, primary emphasis at this time was on Christians and churches acting on behalf of colonized peoples by seeking to influence government and private sector decisions.

Problems of Control

The Report on Unemployment from the 1930 Conference of Christian Social Workers held in London expressed concern about reduced participation in the governing of industry: "Our study of Rationalization makes it evident that the ultimate control of the world's industrial machine is being vested in ever fewer and fewer hands."⁵ Of particular concern was the negative impact which such a

⁴Jerusalem (1925), pp. 11-12.

⁵London (1930), p. 25.

constricting sphere of influence could have on guiding the nature and product of industrial operations toward creative social ends.⁶ The report went on to propose that labor participate in the control of industry with the aim of thereby increasing the possibility of making work more meaningful.⁷

Equal Opportunity

In 1937 the Oxford Conference condemned the radical disparity of income and access to resources between the rich and poor. Appealing, as did the Jerusalem report a decade earlier, to the brotherhood of humanity, the Conference affirmed the right of all persons to have access to the material resources essential to meet basic human need.⁸ The opportunity for all children to participate in meaningful educational experiences which would facilitate the maximization of their God given potential was aggressively asserted along with the rights of persons to participate in political, social and economic life on the basis of their ability rather than on the basis of race.⁹ Returning to

⁶London (1930), p. 25.

⁷London (1930), p. 29.

⁸Oxford (1937), pp. 88-9, 99.

⁹Oxford (1937), pp. 89-90, 99.

the theme struck at London in 1930 the Conference decried the possession and abuse of power by "a few individuals or groups who are not responsible to any organ of society."¹⁰ Both conferences emphasized critiques of the concentration of power rather than enunciating principles and proposals for more participatory structures of political, economic and industrial organization. In its discussion of Christian response to these problems the Oxford report, however, evidenced a bias in favor of democratic process and control of power.¹¹

Nations as Well

The IMC Conference held at Tambaram in 1938 echoed the concerns for equality of opportunity and sharing of material resources.¹² The discussion was carried a step further with the observation that all nations do not participate equally in "access to the world's raw materials, financial assistance and open areas."¹³ A concept of solidarity was proposed as a major characteristic of the local congregation "in which all are responsible for the

¹⁰Oxford (1937), p. 90.

¹¹Oxford (1937), p. 95.

¹²Tambaram (1938), p. 108.

¹³Tambaram (1938), p. 109.

the physical welfare and economic security of each."¹⁴ Christians were encouraged to engage in political activity which would result in the relief of the oppressed and exploited.¹⁵ While this position reflected basically activity by one group on behalf of another, the right of workers to organize in order to represent themselves was strongly defended.¹⁶

During these early years few explicit references to participation were made. Nevertheless, certain trends did emerge concerning participation in ecumenical dialogue and the participation of the churches and of individuals in political and economic issues. Ecumenical dialogue was to be as broadly based as possible. It should engage not only those within the churches, but also and especially persons within and beyond the church who possess particular "technical" knowledge which could guide and inform the discussions.¹⁷

Churches were expected to participate in analyzing and addressing political and economic ills and issues.

¹⁴Tambaram (1938), p. 110.

¹⁵Tambaram (1938), p. 111.

¹⁶Tambaram (1938), p. 111.

¹⁷As noted in Chapter I, the IMC also made intentional efforts during this period to insure the participation of greater numbers of young people and representatives from the developing nations.

The emphasis was on redressing existing evils rather than creating new futures. While the right of labor or organize to represent its own interests was repeatedly affirmed the major focus during this period was on the activity of comparatively affluent, powerful Christians on behalf of the poor and oppressed to secure the rights and protect the interests and resources of the latter. The exclusion of large numbers of persons from participation in the decision-making process was reflected in the repeated concern voiced about the concentration and abuse of economic and industrial power in the hands of fewer and fewer people and groups.

A number of basic principles related to the participation of individuals in the political, social and economic spheres also emerged:

(1) A share of material resources: Every person must have access to the basic material necessities required for human existence. Subsistence was not the goal, however. Basic human needs should be met in such a way that growth and creative realization of potential would be facilitated. All persons were to participate in a fair and reasonable sharing of the product of society.

(2) Equal opportunity: Full participation in social, economic, and political life was to be open to all. Every one was to have a chance to apply and develop his or her abilities regardless of racial or ethnic origins.

(3) Equal educational opportunity: The field of education was singled out for particular attention. The hope and future of the young was identified with sound educational experience. The absence or sub-standard nature of educational facilities for many racial and ethnic groups and the poor in general was recognized and condemned.

Concern for the rights of persons to have the opportunity to realize their potential and participate in shaping their lives and societies had been voiced. The discussions of the World Council of Churches in the ensuing years would simplify and expand these concerns.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 1948-1975

Power to Shape Technological Societies

The necessity of creative participation in social processes and decision-making emerged as an important issue at the Amsterdam Assembly. Concentrations of political and economic power and the domination of society by technology were cited as factors which disrupt and inhibit responsible individual and collective social activity.¹⁸ The concept of the Responsible Society sought to redress this problem

¹⁸Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 75.

by setting forth guidelines for society under "modern conditions":¹⁹

It is required that the people have freedom to control, to criticize and to change their governments that power be made responsible by law and tradition, and be distributed as widely as possible through the whole community.

Affirming the necessity of equal opportunity as a basic requirement of society the Assembly condemned "any denial to man of an opportunity to participate in the shaping of society, for this is a duty implied in man's responsibility towards his neighbor."²⁰

The primary focus at Amsterdam was on creative participation in modern, technical societies. With the passage of time the scope of this concern would be significantly broadened in World Council discussion. To the familiar themes of equality of opportunity and access to material resources was added the imperative that all people were to participate in the control and use of power within the society. This participation in decision-making was to be assumed as a manifestation of the law of love-of-neighbor.

Justice and participation were explicitly connected in the report of the Second Assembly held in 1954 at

¹⁹Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 78.

²⁰Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 78.

Evanston. Political institutions which "encourage responsible participation by all citizens" were stated as one requirement of justice.²¹ Christians were encouraged to be active participants in political affairs in order to nurture those elements of society which mitigate oppression and tyranny.²² In substance the Evanston report followed closely the positions set forth at Amsterdam. At this point in the World Council discussions two basic dimensions of participation had emerged: (1) All persons were to have equal opportunity to share in the material resources and the decision-making processes of society; and, (2) certain forms of participation were deemed appropriate, and at times imperative, for Christians, i.e., political activity in support of certain general principles.

The 1959 summary conference at Thessalonica reaffirmed the principles that workers must be meaningful participants in the economic process and that they must share equitably in its product.²³ That conference also charged the church with responsibility of preparing people, especially those in urban areas, for "greater participation in the affairs of the community."²⁴

²¹Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 115.

²²Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 115.

²³Thessalonica (1959), pp. 81-82.

²⁴Thessalonica (1959), p. 103.

New Delhi: A Broad Emphasis Begun

Participation, in varying dimensions, was a theme which was woven throughout the fabric of the report of the section on Service of the 1961 New Delhi Assembly. Repeated attention was given to the participation of Christians and churches in society, and to their role in facilitating greater participation of all persons in social, political and economic affairs. Solidarity and identification with the poor and oppressed, especially with the victims of racism, was affirmed as a necessary form of Christian participation in and throughout the world.²⁵ Compassion was to provide one basis for "positive but discriminating participation,"²⁶ while love of neighbor (a factor familiar from Amsterdam) would lead the Christian to seek political institutions which would facilitate the participation of all persons.²⁷

The Church was given the responsibility of encouraging Christians to participate actively in public affairs, but governments, especially those which claim that the people are not ready or able to vote, were also charged with equipping and educating people for involvement in the

²⁵Official Report, 3rd Assembly, pp. 94, 101-04.

²⁶Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 95.

²⁷Official Report, 3rd Assembly, pp. 100-01.

governing process.²⁸ Once again a bias in favor of the western model of democracy-by-ballot had emerged in ecumenical discussion. The appearance of such a position within the New Delhi report is made all the more interesting by the mention earlier in the report of awareness of the fact that structures of political organization, which also directly effect modes of public participation, may necessarily differ from traditional western democratic models.²⁹ Colonial governments should not use "ignorance" of the indigenous population as an excuse to withhold self-government, but training the population to function through suffrage as the primary form of participation may do violence to local and regional traditions and cultures, and may not take realistic account of political and economic conditions.

The New Delhi report carried a step further the awareness voiced at the 1938 Tambaram conference of the inequalities existing between nations. "The churches," it was asserted, "must not cease to champion the cause of making the riches of the developed countries available to those poor in resources."³⁰ Now nations as well as

²⁸Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 102.

²⁹Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 100.

³⁰Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 107.

individuals were to participate in the sharing of necessary material goods.

The concept of participation was explicitly more prominent in the New Delhi report than in the product of the previous assemblies or Church and Society conferences. A report on the theme of "Service" could well be expected to emphasize Christian participation in and for the world. A number of previously defined dimensions of participation were recalled:

- (1) the need for individuals to be involved in decision-making about their lives;
- (2) racism as a gross denial of the right of participation;
- (3) the responsibility of the church collectively to act where appropriate and to lead and challenge individual Christians to act;
- (4) action on behalf of others;
- (5) appeals to the love of neighbor as the motivating factor for securing the participation of all people in political processes.

Although it was not an exclusive focus, the report emphasized participation in political activities.

In addition, New Delhi added certain dimensions to the discussion of participation: (1) compassion was articulated as a basis for involvement; (2) solidarity and identification with the oppressed were commanded for the

Christian; and (3) nations as well as individuals were accorded the right of sharing in the distribution of resources.

Controlling Technology

The 1966 World Conference on Church and Society held in Geneva concluded that a benevolent autocracy or oligarchy is not an acceptable substitute for participation of the people in the decision-making process.³¹ In accord with previous assemblies the conference reaffirmed the principle that law must "bring about responsible participation of those affected by it."³²

Recalling the concern voiced at Amsterdam regarding the relation between technology and society it was asserted that technological societies "necessitate far-reaching popular participation."³³ This principle was based on the premise that failure to involve people in decision-making diminished human dignity--for every person "is called by God to take part in the planning and governing of his society."³⁴ The report went on to cite a variety of

³¹Geneva (1966), p. 100.

³²Geneva (1966), p. 118.

³³Geneva (1966), p. 192.

³⁴Geneva (1966), p. 192.

benefits which would ensue from popular participation including expanded insights for and criticisms of technological application.³⁵ Broad-based popular participation in making decisions about the role and applications of technology in society would, it was assumed at Geneva, render technology accountable and make its applications less destructive.

The growing emphasis upon participation which would be dramatically asserted at the Uppsala Assembly was given a preliminary but powerful summary at the Zagorsk consultation held a few months before the fourth assembly. The consultation concluded:

Our century is challenging its structures to give participation to the non-industrial and non-white parts of the world as the 19th century was challenged to give it to the working class. The result of non-participation can be violence.³⁶

Global Community

Many familiar dimensions of participation were voiced at the fourth assembly held at Uppsala in 1968. Unprecedented, however, was the intense application of these concepts to the nations, peoples and churches of the Third World; frequently and forcefully voiced by Third World representatives. Not only were aspects of participation now

³⁵Geneva (1966), p. 193.

³⁶Zagorsk (1968), p. 74.

being directly applied to Third World peoples but a call was also issued for greater creative interaction in global community. This theme was sounded early in the report with challenge to Christians "to overcome a provincial, narrow sense of solidarity and to create a sense of participation in a worldwide responsible society with justice for all."³⁷

In effect the Uppsala Assembly represented a Third World call for: (1) the right of their peoples to participate fully and creatively in determining the social, political, economic and technological dimensions of their lives; (2) the right of their nations to participate as peers within the community of nations; and, (3) the affluent of the world to open themselves to creative participation in a global community which recognizes the needs and rights of all peoples.³⁸ A clear attempt was made to

³⁷Official Report, 4th Assembly, p. 45.

³⁸De Vries devoted one section of his article discussing the Geneva '66 and Uppsala '68 reports to the ethics of participation. He dismissed concern about denial of participation being unjust as "generation tension" or confusion in the face of complex forces at work in society. He concluded that the ethics of participation is a part of social ethics, but that he "did not find it spelled out in the reports." The section concluded with a report of ecumenical process as an exemplary model of participation. De Vries' analysis of the concern for participation voiced within the ecumenical movement did justice neither to the motives behind nor the substance of the concept. See Preston, pp. 48-9.

move the churches to an expanded level of advocacy and action by calling them to "participate in a responsible way in movements for radical structural changes necessary to establish more justice in society."³⁹

THE FUTURUM

Charting the Course

The "Prospectus" for the futurum study, published in 1969 reflected a concern for participation in the rationale underlying the inquiry and in the proposed conduct of the program. In assessing the situation the prospectus concluded that developing nations must participate more fully in the benefits resulting from technology, and called for their greater involvement in areas of technological planning and application of special importance to them.⁴⁰ A relation between participation and certain dimensions of justice and sustainability was implied in the assertion that "it will be intolerable if a relatively small minority of mankind continues to determine the direction and pace of the development of the world's natural resources," because such an imbalance perpetuates the gap

³⁹Official Report, 4th Assembly, p. 53.

⁴⁰Futurum, Prospectus, p. 4.

between rich and poor and enhances exploitation.⁴¹

Section B, dealing with problems of social injustice, emphasized the need to explore the problems posed by technological change in relation to political organization and decision-making in general, and the need for new forms of political participation in complex societies to meet the challenge posed by the "domination by technical experts."⁴² Confidence in the power of popular participation to facilitate the good and mitigate the bad was reflected in the call for the churches to "arouse their members to responsible participation so that the potentialities of the future may be realized and its dangers averted."⁴³ Thus at the outset of the Futurum study three dimensions of participation were articulated: (1) the Third World must have greater involvement in guiding and benefiting from technology; (2) affluent, technological societies must allow a greater role for the general public in making decisions related to technology in order to remove the domination of its control by experts; and (3) the churches have a role to play in promoting informed participation by Christians in the decision-making processes. Initial

⁴¹Futurum, Prospectus, p. 6.

⁴²Futurum, Prospectus, p. 4.

⁴³Futurum, Prospectus, pp. 4-5.

concern focused primarily on participation in making decisions related to the control and use of technology.

A Voice for Each and All

As the Futurum inquiry progressed, various concerns about participation were voiced repeatedly. The 1970 Geneva exploratory conference articulated a broad ranged principle for the relation between technology and participation: "All people whose lives are affected by the operation of technological power should have a say in its development and operation."⁴⁴

Further insight into this position was provided in the report of the consultation held by the sub-unit on Church and Society at Nemi in 1971. In the section of the report entitled "Participation in a Technological World - the Future of Political and Economic Systems," mention was made of the growing popular demand for increased participation in making decisions relating to every dimension of life.⁴⁵ Recognizing that increased technological sophistication and complexity appeared to favor decision-making by a knowledgeable elite it was asserted that "demands for participation by ordinary people must be met if we are to

⁴⁴Geneva (1970), p. 75.

⁴⁵Nemi (1971), p. 16.

live as human beings in a humane society."⁴⁶ The type of participation envisioned transcended the more passive and technically controlled forms of surveys or market research. Rather what was advocated were increased opportunities "for people to criticize the experts, to explain what they need and want, to protest and propose."⁴⁷ In effect it was asserted that it is not adequate to simply give people opportunities to voice their preference for one proffered product or application of technology over another. People have the right and must be given the opportunity to meaningfully criticize existing technologies and to have an effective voice in shaping future decisions.

The Nemi meeting echoed previous calls for greater and more authentic Third World participation in the global community, indicating an awareness of the need for more creative participation at a variety of levels including individuals, groups and nations.⁴⁸ In order to facilitate better understanding of the dynamics involved it was recommended that Church and Society promote some study of effective participation in decision-making.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Nemi (1971), p. 16.

⁴⁷Nemi (1971), p. 16.

⁴⁸Nemi (1971), p. 16.

⁴⁹Nemi (1971), p. 17.

The 1972 Cardiff consultation reaffirmed the wide scope envisioned at Geneva in 1970 by asserting the need to "promote the participation of all persons in the making of social decisions."⁵⁰ A footnote was added, however, indicating that although such a broad statement might be misconstrued it was deemed more desirable to err on the side of inclusiveness rather than add a qualifying term such as "appropriate" to participation and thus open the door to prejudicial exclusiveness.⁵¹ The Cardiff report also indicated that participation in decision-making should be a determining factor in establishing appropriate scales of political, economic and community organization.⁵²

Regional Perspectives

During 1972 and 1973 the three regional consultations sponsored by Church and Society provided reflections on participation from particularized settings. The Accra conference affirmed the need for broad-based participation in the application of appropriate technologies in African nations and cited the Tanzanian experiment with Ujamaa

⁵⁰Cardiff (1972), p. 3.

⁵¹Cardiff (1972), p. 3.

⁵²Cardiff (1972), p. 4.

villages as an example.⁵³ Emulating the excessive nature of the Cardiff statement, but undoubtedly with the same justification in mind, the consultants at Accra asserted that it should be assured that "every citizen participates in all social, political and economic institutions."⁵⁴

The consultation for Europe and North American held at Pont-a-Mousson in 1973 gave particular attention to dimensions of participation by the Christian community in addition to affirming the basic principles previously articulated such as the need for greater public participation in the evaluation and control of technology.⁵⁵ The right and need for persons to participate in "all decision making processes" was rooted in the conviction that "man is a creative being, made in the image of God and called to cooperate with him in creation."⁵⁶

Christians in Europe and North American were encouraged to support Third World self-reliance by establishing direct contacts with movements centered on peoples' participation in the Third World.⁵⁷ The Pont-a-Mousson

⁵³Accra (1972), p. 342.

⁵⁴Accra (1972), p. 343.

⁵⁵Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 5.

⁵⁶Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 5.

⁵⁷Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 13.

consultants also explored dimensions of a Christian life style which would include the distribution of power and the democratization of decision-making through "a style of involvement in the economic, technological and political systems which will aim at the meaningful participation of all people involved on the broadest possible scale."⁵⁸

In discussing justice as one of the ethical principles to guide the use of technology justice and participation were linked together through the assertion that justice is God's activity of bringing the poor and oppressed "into the community of free and equal persons, and empowering them to take part in it."⁵⁹ In short, the Pont-a-Mousson consultation concluded that a Christian life style includes efforts to establish broad-based participation in the sharing of power and decision-making on the basis of "imago Dei" in persons and because of the nature of God's action to realize justice.

The Asian consultation meeting at Kuala Lumpur affirmed the responsibility of the churches to nurture participatory movements in church and society and to oppose structures of oppression and domination.⁶⁰ Attention was

⁵⁸Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 13.

⁵⁹Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 14.

⁶⁰Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 31.

also directed to the impact of technology on women in Asia and the need for fuller participation of women in leadership and decision-making.⁶¹

Bucharest 1974

Four basic dimensions of participation emerged in the report of a summary conference of the Futurum inquiry held at Bucharest in 1974. Participation was seen as:

- (1) the basic goal of development;
- (2) the involvement of all persons in shaping power and making decisions about society;
- (3) an essential factor in creating a sustainable society;
- (4) an activity to be encouraged by and an aspect of Christian community.

At two separate points the Burcharest report affirmed that a primary goal of development is the full participation of all persons in the decision-making processes of society.⁶² Recalling a conviction voiced at the Amsterdam Assembly, a preference for involvement in smaller groups allowing greater direct participation was expressed.⁶³ The belief

⁶¹Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 35.

⁶²Burcharest (1974), pp. 15, 30.

⁶³Burcharest (1974), p. 30; Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 77.

that effective and responsible economic and social control can be achieved through participation was reflected in the assertion that "political and economic participation is also a prerequisite for fixing ethical goals for patterns of production and consumption."⁶⁴

In the context of repeatedly affirming full participation for all persons in social, political and economic power and decision-making⁶⁵ the report emphasized the need for: structural change;⁶⁶ particular attention to control technology;⁶⁷ and, the special need to secure the rights of women and children.⁶⁸ A clear challenge was issued to those who defend the control of power and influence on the basis of protecting the interests of the affluent who it is often claimed have the most to loose. The principle was asserted that "in a world of great injustice it is those who suffer most who should have the greatest stake in planning and decision-making."⁶⁹

Participation was explicitly related to sustainability at Bucharest in a variety of ways. Due to the

⁶⁴Bucharest (1974), p. 30.

⁶⁵Bucharest (1974), p. 30.

⁶⁶Bucharest (1974), pp. 6, 27, 28.

⁶⁷Bucharest (1974), pp. 14, 24.

⁶⁸Bucharest (1974), p. 8.

⁶⁹Bucharest (1974), p. 7.

heating of the atmosphere resulting from the creation and expansion of large urban-industrial centers it was advocated that the growth and development of such centers should be a matter of global rather than simply national determination.⁷⁰ An essential element of a sustainable society, social stability, was judged unattainable without broad-based participation in decision-making.⁷¹ The scope of participation necessary within the global community was dramatically asserted in the conclusion that "the utmost effort of every member of humanity will be needed if the impending catastrophies of hunger and poverty are to be averted."⁷²

The final section of the Bucharest report provided insight into changing theological understandings of the relation of humanity to the rest of creation and the implications of these for a sustainable future. Note was taken of the shifting emphasis from human mastery over creation to a realization of the need to participate in a continuing creation."⁷³ A shift in human self-understanding from master and subduer of hostile elements to cooperator

⁷⁰Bucharest (1974), p. 11.

⁷¹Bucharest (1974), p. 12.

⁷²Bucharest (1974), p. 14.

⁷³Bucharest (1974), pp. 35-36.

and co-creator with God was advocated which would also affect human understandings of and relations to the rest of the created order.

Some attention was given by the Bucharest delegates to the relationship between the churches and participation. The church was deemed to have a necessary role in advocating the participation of all persons in society, and in training and equipping its members for creative involvement through their work and community activities.⁷⁴ Christians were challenged to both support and, through identification and in solidarity, act with peoples movements seeking greater participation.⁷⁵ A reminder to allow full lay participation within the church was also issued.⁷⁶

NAIROBI 1975

In analyzing the dimensions of development the Nairobi assembly pointed to the lack of popular participation in economic and political decision-making and in sharing the land as a cause of poverty and hunger.⁷⁷ A number of themes which had been articulated at earlier conferences and assemblies were recalled, including:

⁷⁴Bucharest (1974), p. 24.

⁷⁵Bucharest (1974), pp. 21, 25, 28.

⁷⁶Bucharest (1974), p. 28.

⁷⁷Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 122-23.

participation to guide and control technology;⁷⁸ the role of church in participation and the role of participation in the church;⁷⁹ and the need to insure the creative involvement of women in all dimensions of life.⁸⁰ Particular attention was given to the need for the restoration of positive relationships between individuals, the whole of humanity, God and creation which culminated in the assertion that "it is the vocation of Christians to participate obediently in this work of restoration."⁸¹ The World Council was also called upon to undertake and support research which would enable persons to participate in the shaping of a new economic order.⁸²

SUMMARY

From a concern for broad representation in ecumenical discussions to the call for a share in the restoration of creative relationships with God and all of creation the concept of participation has grown and evolved in ecumenical thought during the fifty years under consideration. Modifications may be found in almost every dimension of the

⁷⁸Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 126.

⁷⁹Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 133, 136-7.

⁸⁰Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 140-41.

⁸¹Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 135.

⁸²Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 139-40.

the participation of those in the affluent nations might take different forms from those in Third World nations even though both may be seeking a more responsible economic order or disarmament. During the period under consideration the emphasis moved increasingly toward affirmation of the second and third categories of participation. Attention was focused on respecting the right of persons to affirm responsibility for and the possibility of choosing and acting on their lives rather than doing things "for" others. Christians were repeatedly challenged to join in solidarity in these struggles.

Four levels of participation appeared in relation to these categories.

(1) Individual: Action undertaken by one person which may be done in relation to any of the three categories.

(2) Corporate: The activity of a group or coalition of groups seeking change. These may function in each of the categories.

(3) National: The involvement of a nation within the community of nations in realizing its goals and pursuing its policies. Operations in categories one and two are obvious. The World Council discussions in recent years reflected increased concern for the right of every nation to participate with authority and integrity in international decisions. OPEC, The European Economic Community and the

proposal of the New International Economic Order by the Group of Seventy-Seven may be seen as efforts at solidarity among nations.

(4) Global: The concept of a world community which in the contemporary situation faces problems and presents possibilities which transcend the previous three levels. Solidarity is the only category applicable at this level. Within World Council discussions the call for global conceptualization and a response grounded in solidarity has been voiced with increased urgency and frequency since 1968.

Over the years several dimensions of life were identified in which participation was deemed to be essential. These dimensions represented aspects of individual and corporate existence in which all persons and groups have the right and the responsibility to participate.

(1) Equal opportunity: Every person should live under conditions which permit the chance to develop his/her God given potential. Early ecumenical discussions placed particular emphasis on the negative impact of racism in relation to this principle, and upon the need of all children to have access to quality educational opportunities. More recently the concern for the full participation of women in society has been consistently voiced in the discussions under consideration.

(2) Fair distribution of goods: Access to the resources necessary to sustain life and permit creative growth

should be available to all. Throughout the period this right of people to participate in the product of society has been asserted. Varied social, political, and economic conditions will effect the forms of participation in the distribution of goods.

(3) Sharing power: People should not only share in the product of society they must also have voice in determining the shape of society and the nature and methods of production. This principle was grounded in the realization that fully human life goes beyond the sharing of material resources, although meeting basic requirements in that area is essential, to the right to participate in making decisions about the shape and direction of one's life and society. Thus the initial calls sounded in the thirties for workers to have a voice in determining products and techniques of production have been amplified and expanded in World Council discussions to assert the right of all persons to share economic, political and social power through participation in decision-making and their creative involvement in these areas of life.

(4) Control of technology: All persons should have a voice in the development, selection and application of technologies affecting their lives. Once again, this concern has been a part of ecumenical discussions for much of the period under consideration. In recent years it has been voiced with increased urgency in light of the growing

understanding of participation including the creation of truly ecumenical dialogue resulting from the participation of Roman Catholic representatives in World Council discussions in the late 1960's.

Three basic categories of participation have emerged. The first, activity on behalf of others, represents activity undertaken to provide something for another or others. This may be done with or without consultation with or the consent of the intended beneficiary. Such involvement may include relief projects or attempts by a group to change political or economic structures. The second category, action on one's own behalf, involves individuals or groups seeking to modify their own situation. Labor movement activity referred to in the conferences of the thirties or the various people's movements which have figured more prominently in recent discussions would be example of this type of participation. The third category which emerged, solidarity, results from the identification of a group or individual with the needs and rights of another. This issues in a common understanding of goal and purpose, and joint action to secure necessary change. At times this may mean identification through the adoption of similar conditions and methods of action. Often solidarity may be expressed by a common understanding of the nature and necessity of change while various forms of action, determined by location and resources of the participants, will be used to transform the situation. Thus

awareness of the direction and determination of society by technology and technologists. Originally much attention was focused on the control of modern technology in industrialized societies. The regional conferences held during the Futurum studies emphasized the right and necessity of Third World peoples to participate in the development and application of appropriate technologies for their cultures and environments.

(5) Global community:⁸³ In a world shrunken by communication, commerce and geo-politics expanding awareness of and commitment to problems and possibilities of global perspective is essential. While John R. Mott, as was shown in Part I, articulated the need for a "world" view that truly deserved that name, the implications of his prophetic call have become more urgent with the growing awareness of issues not known to Mott which threaten humanity and much of creation on this planet. Thus the World Council discussions included issues such as nuclear disarmament, atmospheric heating, genetic engineering and world food supplies which require global perspective and cooperative action at that level.

⁸³The appearance of "global" both in this section on dimensions and that on categories is neither oversight nor redundancy. The global concept relates to a specific area of involvement to which World Council discussions have directed attention and called for involvement. It also represents a type of involvement which moves significantly beyond the first three categories listed above.

(6) Restoration of creative relationships: Christians in particular are challenged to reassess the role of humanity in creation and to participate in creative relationship with other human beings, with the rest of creation and with God. This focus was clearly articulated in World Council discussions in the early 1970's. Arising out of the awareness of the impact of technology on human and non-human creation it led to calls for cooperation with God's creative activity rather than an emphasis on human domination of creation.

These dimensions represent identifiable areas of life in which the participation of all persons was advocated as a right or responsibility. While in no way diminishing concern for these areas it must be remembered that in the final years of the period under consideration it became increasingly common for the World Council discussions under consideration here to simply call for the full participation of all people in all decisions related to their lives.

A wide variety of rationales was offered to undergird the advocacy of this broad-based, wide-range participation. The motivations given for advocating and seeking to secure the participation of persons in decisions affecting their lives followed a general trend. During the early years motivation focused, although not exclusively, on reasoning centered around benevolent concern for the other. More recently the emphasis has been on the rights of all

persons and God's affirmation of and acts to realize those rights, especially in relation to the poor and oppressed. The various rationales offered may be summarized as follows:

(1) Love of neighbor: The command to love neighbor as self requires that the types of participation valued for self be sought for all.

(2) Brotherhood of humanity: Since the human community comprises one family the same rights should extend to all its members.

(3) Compassion: Sympathy, and concern for the oppressed should motivate the Christian to participation on behalf of the oppressed.

(4) Justice: On occasion participation was asserted as one of the requirements of justice. At Pont-a-Mousson, however, justice was declared to be God's activity of bringing the poor into the mainstream of life and enabling their full participation there.

(5) Human dignity: Participation was defined as an essential part of human dignity and thus without it truly human life and humane society would not be possible.

(6) Image of God: Since humanity is created in the image of God and God participates in creation it was asserted that it is also of the nature of persons to participate in sharing life.

(7) Cooperation with creativity: Humanity is created and called by God to cooperate with rather than

contend against God's creative actions. At this point, in particular, participation became closely related to sustainability.

At times the World Council discussions under consideration here gave the impression that the benefit, wisdom and responsibility of any decision is directly proportional to the number of persons making that decision. Four factors mitigate such a conclusion. The first was the principle that every person has the right to accept responsibility for his/her own life rather than having control exercised by other individuals or groups. The second was the presupposition that persons will have some knowledge of the options and consequences available and that increased participation will maximize the awareness and consideration of options and consequences. The third was the assumption that as people have increased opportunity to participate authentically together they will seek that which is good and creative. Within the Christian context the reliance upon God to facilitate this later point was at times affirmed in the discussions. Fourthly, repeated references over time were made to the need to create and nurture a wide variety of smaller collectives which facilitate meaningful participation.

Options for controlling the scale of structural organization appear more readily at the local, regional and even national levels. Solidarity and identification would again seem to be the most appropriate category to apply to

the global level. The possibility, however, for human sin and collective ignorance, rather than wisdom, to be expressed in more participatory decision-making must still be recognized.

Within individuals and groups there are basic factors which influence the courses of action considered and undertaken. In general these include such things as religious, ethical and cultural values, experience in these areas, and educational background. The World Council discussions have tended to emphasize those dimensions of life and faith which would contribute to creative decision-making as a result of increased participation. A number of factors exist, however, which mitigate any facile assumption that greater participation will necessarily result in wiser and fairer decisions. Table 3 summarizes these positive and negative factors.

These categories are illustrative, not exhaustive. They indicate, however, some dimensions of human experience which may complicate the decision-making process, even when participation is broadened. Under these constraints decisions made by larger groups may be no more enlightened or just than those of more limited representation.

Studies in the nature and growth of "civil" religion have explored the coopting of religious values and principles to bless the opinions, beliefs, and decisions

Table 3

Positive and Negative Factors Which May Effect
the Quality of Decisions, Even in
Light of Increased Participation

NEGATIVE	POSITIVE
Pride (personal, group, national)	Humility
Insecurity	Faith and confidence
Excessive self or group interest	Love of neighbor
Limited awareness of alter- natives	Expanding awareness of alter- natives
Primary attention to conse- quences for self or group	Willingness to consider conse- quences for self <u>and</u> human and non-human others
Excessive or deficient power and influence	Peerage among participants
Competition and superiority	Cooperation, joint achievement, common humanity

of large numbers of people, especially in affluent societies.⁸⁴ Collective decisions taken by such groups in meetings, or reflected in voting and purchasing patterns have frequently contributed to the oppression of others or the destruction of the environment either directly or indirectly. The studies in civil religion provide one example of the importance of the values and perspectives held by

⁸⁴Marie Augusta Neal, A Socio-Theology of Letting Go (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 118 p.; Helmut Gollwitzer, The Rich Christians and Poor Lazarus (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 108 p.

those making the decisions. In this instance increasing the number of participants may not significantly alter the ensuing decisions. Broadening the nature of participants may, but then it must be assumed that all those involved share equally in power and influence.

Chapter 5

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has been heard as "a new dimension in ecumenical social thought."¹ To be sure, the term sustainability appeared as a relatively recent entry in the ecumenical lexicon. The task of this chapter is to trace the development of thought in the early ecumenical and World Council discussions under consideration in this study to identify what ideas and insights "familiar" in World Council discussions were subsumed in this new concept, and what "new" dimensions appeared with its use. In short, the present concern is to trace the emergence of the concept of sustainability and the initial definition of the term.

In order to guide this analysis some preliminary attention must be given to the introduction of the term to World Council discussions.² The first application of the term "sustainable" recorded in World Council literature appeared in a presentation by Charles Birch to the 1971

¹Statement by Paul Abrecht, sub-unit on Church and Society, personal interview, Geneva, January 14, 1981.

²The present study does not imply that the concept of sustainability is uniquely confined to World Council dialogue. Rather the concern here is with the introduction and use of the term within those discussions.

Nemi conference in which he referred to the conclusion of systems studies of world dynamics that the patterns of urbanization and industrialization developed in the United States are not sustainable.³ A three year hiatus then occurred until the term "sustainable society" officially entered the ecumenical vocabulary in the report of the 1974 Bucharest Conference.⁴

The sustainable society as originally defined at Bucharest embodied four basic characteristics:⁵

1. Social stability based on equitable distribution of scarce resources and broad-based participation in making social decisions.
2. An adequate and renewable food supply, and the control of pollutants to a level within the absorption capacity of the ecosystem.

³Charles Birch, "Science Looks Within Itself and Turns Outward," Anticipation No. 10 (February 1972), 10; citing J.W. Forrester, "Counterintuitive Behavior of Social Systems," Technology Review, LXXIII, (1971), 52.

⁴Draft Report-Conference on Science and Technology for Human Development: The Ambiguous Future and the Christian Hope, Bucharest (1974) Draft Report.

⁵Bucharest (1974), Draft Report, p. 25. Since the concept of sustainability appeared in the mid-seventies in the context of the Futurum Study some attention must be given to its basic meaning as originally defined in order to provide guidelines for analysis of the material under examination here which appeared prior to the articulation of the concept.

3. A rate of use of non-renewable resources which does not out run the increase in resources made available through technological innovation.

4. A level of human activity which is not disrupted by climatic variation.

The report then described its vision of a sustainable society as "a world where (1) the security of the individual, (2) the redistribution of material wealth, and (3) the implementation of a maximum level of consumption are all effected by a transnational social security system dividing the responsibility for the fate of the individual among all people."⁶

A number of these characteristics have already received attention in previous chapters of this study, and they will not be rehearsed at this point. Particular attention will be given in this chapter to tracing the emergence of concerns related to issues such as resource use and abuse, pollution control and ecology.⁷

⁶Bucharest (1974), Draft Report, p. 25. This description bears striking resemblance to a task given to the local church by the 1938 IMC conference at Tambaram. The Church was called to "promote a sense of and practice in Christian brotherhood in which all are responsible for the physical welfare and economic security of each." Tambaram (1938), p. 110, emphasis added.

⁷Ecology here is used in the sense of concern for and with the relation of the various dimensions of creation to each other and to the whole.

Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the concept of sustainability, from its initial articulation, included the variety of characteristics outlined above.

THE EARLY YEARS 1925-1948

The 1928 Jerusalem Conference emphasized that the development of the natural resources of "undeveloped" areas must reflect a concern for the protection and welfare of the indigenuous people while at the same time making their resources available to the world as a whole.⁸ In a statement which anticipated by over thirty years an issue which would become one of the major points of contention in the debates over sustainability the Oxford Conference of 1937 affirmed that:⁹

The resources of the earth, such as the soil and mineral wealth, should be recognized as gifts of God to the whole human race and used with due and balanced consideration for the needs of present and future generations.

At Tambaram in 1938 the delegates concluded that the social and economic patterns dominant in the world at that time

⁸Jerusalem (1928), p. 11. In later years and in light of the growing awareness of the finitude of resources it would be argued by some that the only way to protect the interest of indiginous people would be to withhold some indiginous supplies of scarce but vital resources so that when a Third World people reached a point where their culture could utilize such resources they would still be available.

⁹Oxford (1937), p. 100.

made the stewardship of natural resources extremely difficult.¹⁰ The Church, it was asserted, must accept the responsibility to "teach man his duty to preserve the natural resources of the earth, such as forests, tree crops, and the very soil itself, of which he is God's steward."¹¹

Prior to 1948, references to the dimensions of sustainability currently under consideration were neither lengthy nor frequent, yet some significant issues were raised:

(1) The affirmation that natural resources are for the benefit of all humanity including present and future generations;

(2) The awareness that global social and economic patterns mitigate the responsible use of resources; and,

(3) The affirmation of the need to conserve and preserve the vegetative resources of the globe and the soil which enables their growth in the spirit of stewardship.

¹⁰Tambaram (1938), p. 105.

¹¹Tambaram (1938), p. 110.

THE WORLD COUNCIL 1948-1975Man and Nature: Opening the debate

The record of the plenary discussion on the report of Section III at the Amsterdam Assembly recorded the objection of a person identified only as "an Australian delegate" to the use in the draft report of the phrase asserting that technology "enables men the better to master nature" on the grounds that "men needed to understand and co-operate with nature."¹² In this rather anecdotal fashion the issue of the understanding of the nature of humanity and the rest of the creation and their relation to each other was introduced into assembly discussion. Concern with this relationship would form one of the major areas of theological debate in shaping the concept of sustainability.¹³

The Amsterdam report pointed out that technology may disrupt creative social and cultural patterns and asserted that "it has accentuated the tendency in men to waste God's gift to them in the soil and other natural

¹²Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 82. The final text indicated that the delegate's position carried the day, as reflected in the wording "it enables men the better to use nature." See p. 75.

¹³See the discussion of the Futurum Study below.

resources."¹⁴ Thus a second set of issues related to sustainability was raised: the nature and application of technology and its impact on resource use and abuse.

The Evanston Assembly did not eschew a reference to man's mastery of nature, but it concluded that within that achievement lay the threat of his destruction.¹⁵ Soil conservation was affirmed and farmers were cautioned to "resist the temptations to exhaust the soil."¹⁶ Anticipating what would become a major emphasis in the concept of sustainability the report condemned the "tendencies to create unlimited wants" through irresponsible salesmanship and advertising.¹⁷

Resources Reassessed: The Affirmation of Unlimited Growth

The 1959 Thessalonica conference which concluded the Rapid Social Change Study provided insight into a growing optimism about technology. Since technology was seen as presenting new potential for human dominion over

¹⁴Official Report, 1st Assembly, p. 75.

¹⁵Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 1.

¹⁶Official Report, 2nd Assembly, pp. 118-119.

¹⁷Official Report, 2nd Assembly, p. 119. This concern was echoed at the 1956 Arnoldshain Conference which also warned that "a new and dangerous kind of consumption ethics is tollerated as a necessary accompanymnt of the mass production system." The Arnoldshain Report (1956), p. 19.

earth, it was asserted that man is "confronted in a radical way with the question of his responsibility for the whole earth and the whole of human society."¹⁸ The "fundamental hope" for human release from poverty and disease was placed in technology.¹⁹ Related to this confidence in technology was a shift away from a more conservation oriented world view to one which was committed to the possibility of radically unlimited growth:²⁰

We are not living in a static world. The resources available to mankind are continually expanding and will continue to do so as long as we do not engage in fratricidal war or excessively foolish economic policies. We should not be too greatly concerned with problems of redistribution . . . Our eyes should be set on the full use of all the resources of the world, material and human, for the benefit of all, and upon the continuous growth of these resources.

The report affirmed that all resources are God's gift and are to be used for His glory, and concluded that no individual or nation therefore, has an exclusive claim on any resources in their possession by virtue of inheritance, or as the result of their ability or effort.²¹

¹⁸Thessalonica (1958). p. 11

¹⁹Thessalonica (1959), p. 18.

²⁰Thessalonica (1959), pp. 74-75. A similar view had been voiced at the 1930 London Conference where it was asserted that "requisite additional wealth can all be provided by the better utilization of our productive capacities and need not involve the transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor." London (1930), p. 27.

²¹Thessalonica (1959), p. 73

One brief report on the Thessalonica Conference indicated, however, that the stated position on the development of resources had been challenged on theological grounds:²²

Many of the theologians present challenged the statement that "Economic growth takes place by God's grace and under God's providence and judgment." This seemed to give a blessing to all economic and material growth of whatever kind and for whatever purpose.

Despite the theological reservations, the Thessalonica Conference had stated one of the most blatant affirmations of faith in unlimited growth that would ever issue from a Church and Society international conference.

Affirmation of the Mastery of Nature

The New Delhi Assembly continued to espouse the positive dimensions of technology sounded at Thessalonica: "Technological development promises the liberation from hunger, disease and misery."²³ Christians were called upon to welcome man's growing mastery and dominion over nature.²⁴ But the New Delhi Report also evidenced uneasiness about certain aspects of the growing enthusiasm for the promise of science and technology and the escalating domination of

²²"A Report on the Thessalonica Conference," Background Information (November 1959), p. ii.

²³Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 95.

²⁴Official Report, 3rd Assembly, pp. 96-97.

nature by humanity. While cautioning against any artificial division or identity between science and God the report concluded that "many men have come to put their faith and hope in science rather than God."²⁵ Facing recognition of the fact that "many are puzzled about the relation between God, man, and nature" an urgent call was issued for the development of a theology of nature.²⁶ A concern was voiced about the need to control the application of scientific discoveries (technology) and it was forcefully asserted that decisions related to application were ethical rather than scientific.²⁷

Master and Steward: Two Faces of Technology

The 1966 Geneva conference on Church and Society proposed that man is both the master and steward of nature in such a way that he is "a keeper and transformer, not a conqueror" of God's creation.²⁸ The primary purpose and value of nature was still posited in its contribution to human life. Within the Geneva report technology was recognized as having both a "humanizing" and "dehumanizing"

²⁵Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 96.

²⁶Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 96.

²⁷Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 95.

²⁸Geneva (1966), p. 198.

impact on modern, technical societies.²⁹ Thus after a period of more than ten years during which the primary emphasis had been on the positive potential of technology a return to the admission of its positive and negative dimensions emerged. The Zagorsk consultation, which was a direct result of the Geneva Conference, gave brief attention to the impact of technology on man's self understanding and posed again some theological questions raised by the impact of technology on the relation between man and the rest of creation.³⁰

At the Fourth Assembly at Uppsala in 1968 the emphasis was once again placed on the potential of technology to eradicate human suffering and need.³¹ Churches were called upon at one point to "set forth the biblical view of God-given oneness of mankind and to point out its concrete implications for the worldwide solidarity of man and the stewardship of the resources of the earth."³² The Uppsala report echoed the familiar call to explore the impact of technological control of the environment on attitudes toward and understandings of nature, and

²⁹Geneva (1966), pp. 154-55.

³⁰Zagorsk (1968), p. 73.

³¹Official Report, 4th Assembly, pp. 46, 50.

³²Official Report, 4th Assembly, pp. 46, 50.

human self-understanding and activity.³³ The primary focus of the Uppsala Assembly was, however, on issues related to growth and expansion in the perspective of a strong Third World call for a greater share of economic and political product and power.³⁴

THE FUTURUM STUDY

Confronting the paradox

The Prospectus for the Futurm Study summarized in one of its initial statements the dilemma which had given rise to the study and which would guide its course:³⁵

The steadily increasing development of science and technology poses a great paradox for mankind: it is the condition of man's survival and at the same time it threatens his destruction.

A basic difficulty was located in the fact that the ability to apply technology and utilize the information generated by it for creative ends, and the development of social structures and institutions to guide that process, could not keep pace with the expansion of scientific knowledge

³³Official Report, 4th Assembly, p. 51.

³⁴DeVries expressed his dismay over the absence of any references at Uppsala to the threats posed by technology in the area of new forms of destructive warfare and environmental disruption and destruction: "I have found no mention of either of these two in the Uppsala report." pp. 49-51.

³⁵Futurum, Prospectus, p. 2.

and technological development.³⁶ Related to this was the assertion that "people lack the basic information as well as the ethical criteria for making responsible choices between the new options which technology makes possible."³⁷ Thus three factors related to technology figured significantly in the initial conception of the Futurum study: (1) its awesome potential for creative or destructive application; (2) a rate of technological growth and development which out paces society's ability to exercise creative control and application; and, (3) the absence of sufficient information and an operative ethical base which could facilitate making responsible decisions about scientific and technological research and applications.

A number of problems related to the concept of sustainability were listed in the prospectus as possible topics for study. These included: the need for creative environmental policies; population and world food supply; responsible use of the oceans and space; implications of discoveries in genetic and biochemical research; and, over consumption and the creation of consumer demand.³⁸ Section

³⁶Futurum, Prospectus, p. 3

³⁷Futurum, Prospectus, p. 2 Emphasis added.

³⁸Futurum, Prospectus, p. 5.

B dealing with social justice raised the need to consider "the results of technological change for narrowing or widening the economic gap between the rich and the poor nations," anticipating the first dimension of sustainability cited earlier in this chapter.³⁹ A call to examine "the effects of advanced technology on the human and natural environment" was issued in the section concerned with theological issues.⁴⁰

Ecology: A Reality of Relationships

Tension between the concern for creative relationship to the environment and an emphasis on economic and political justice surfaced early on in the Futurum study. S.L. Parmar centered his foreword to the report of the 1970 exploratory conference at Geneva on that theme. Observing that many Third World thinkers "feel that preoccupation with ecology and population is a clever device to avoid the thorny problems of international inequality and world peace" he emphasized the need to demonstrate the areas of compatibility between concern for the environment and commitment to social revolution.⁴¹ In that same

³⁹Futurum, Prospectus, p. 6.

⁴⁰Futurum, Prospectus, p. 7.

⁴¹Geneva (1970), p. 6.

report the concept of ecology as the necessity of understanding creation in terms of the relationships between its various parts was set forth:⁴²

A person relates not only to other people but to the whole complex of animals and things - past, present and to come - which make up his universe. The faith calls men to awe before the givenness of all and joyful celebration of the grace which creates, sustains and redeems the whole process of which humanity is a part. The ecological problem, seen in this context, is more than a challenge to the technicians to stem pollution and maintain ecological diversity. It is a call to the Church to rediscover its dynamic doctrine of creation and to reappraise its oft-distorted understanding of man's calling to stewardship.

After repeated calls over many years in World Council discussions for additional theological reflection on the relationship between humanity and creation the Geneva exploratory conference had introduced into those discussions an understanding based on relation rather than domination.

A Revolution in Perception: Finite Resources, Finite World

The consultation held at Nemi in 1971 introduced into World Council discussion a number of terms and concepts which would feature significantly in subsequent debates.⁴³ After assessing environmental deterioration and some factors

⁴²Geneva (1970), pp. 91-92.

⁴³A number of these concepts had appeared beyond and occasionally within World Council discussions prior to this time but it was from Nemi forward that these figured prominently in World Council discussions.

affecting it such as resource use and population growth the first part of the Nemi report on science and the quality of life observed that "suddenly it appears to many people, with frightening intensity, that we are pushing against the limits of a finite world."⁴⁴ Section IV on "The Human Environment and Responsible Choice" outlined a variety of issues for consideration in relation to resource use and abuse, population growth and control, and the nature, effects and control of pollution.⁴⁵ The report emphasized that the finite nature of non-renewable resources posed urgent questions related to equitable distribution, international social justice and planning for development if the rights of Third World nations and peoples to share in the use of earth's resources was to be affirmed and realized.⁴⁶

One controversy, recorded in a footnote, arose over the question of the degree to which the present human community is obligated to consider and make allowance for

⁴⁴Nemi (1971), pp. 7-8. It was at Nemi that Church and Society participants were given a preview of the Club of Rome "Limits to Growth" perspective in the form of Jurgen Randers paper on "The Carrying Capacity of Our Global Environment." Anticipation No. 8 (September 1971) 2-11. From the time of its introduction up to the present the concept of limits to growth has not been warmly welcomed by all but it has provided a topic for heated discussion for many.

⁴⁵Nemi (1971), pp. 8-12.

⁴⁶Nemi (1971), p. 9.

the potential needs of future generations.⁴⁷ Noting points of contention the report concluded that "we agree that man has responsibility for leaving a good earth to generations which follow, with a diminishing responsibility for generations of the distant future."⁴⁸

At Nemi a number of concerns deemed significant and at times crucial by many in the industrialized, technologically intensive, often affluent nations were given a position of prominence in Church and Society dialogue. These included: (1) the concept of the world as a finite system and the accompanying implication of the existence of limits in certain areas; (2) a concern for the controlled use of non-renewable resources and the maximization of the responsible use of renewable resources; (3) renewed attention to the implications of population growth in a finite world; (4) a focus on the social, economic and environmental

⁴⁷Nemi (1971), p. 13, n.1. As noted above, this concept was voiced in ecumenical dialogue at Oxford in 1937.

⁴⁸Nemi (1971), p. 13, n.1. The New Delhi Assembly had struggled with this issue and concluded that "the true purpose and justification of change is to serve both the present and future welfare of mankind." Emphasis added. Official Report, 3rd Assembly, p. 95.

"costs" of pollution; and, (5) a question of the degree of obligation to future generations.

Cardiff: A Utopia of Environmental Responsibility

The 1972 Cardiff consultation affirmed the articulation of a utopian vision of the future, one dimension of which would be a world "in which we respect the delicacy of the environment."⁴⁹ Part A of the report declared that "it is irresponsible to assume that resources are inexhaustable," and set forth the criteria of diversity and scale of organization in addition to environmental responsibility as guides for selecting alternatives for the future.⁵⁰

Humanity was identified as the one species which possess the power to destroy itself and the earth and, therefore, it bears "the greatest responsibility for the entire biosphere."⁵¹ This image of humanity which emphasized the potential to destroy nature rather than human mastery over it represented a significantly different approach from that of previous World Council reports.

An ambivalent reference was made in the first part of the report to the debate concerning the obligation to

⁴⁹Cardiff (1972), p. 3

⁵⁰Cardiff (1972), pp. 4-5.

⁵¹Cardiff (1972), p. 3.

future generations. Long term planning to facilitate future human occupation of the globe was insisted upon, but "the use of futuristic extrapolations to undercut efforts to meet pressing and urgent needs of those now alive" was rejected.⁵² However, in Part B on "Patterns of Change and the Quality of Life," responsibility to assure the availability of non-renewable resources to future generations and to avoid over-taxing the absorptive capacity of the biosphere were clearly asserted.⁵³

Attention was devoted to a preliminary exploration of elements of an ethic of natural resource use. Section one of this part of the report focused on defining resource limitations, and set forth a list of physical constraints which emphasized the finite nature of the globe, of non-renewable and renewable resources, and of the absorptive capacity of the biosphere.⁵⁴ Technological innovations will extend the parameters of some of these physical constraints, it was noted, but this will not overcome the reality of the finitude

⁵²Cardiff (1972), pp. 4-5.

⁵³Cardiff (1972), p. 7. Reflected here is, no doubt, the continuing debate between members of the Third World stressing the importance of meeting contemporary needs and demands, and the affluent focusing on future needs and concerns.

⁵⁴Cardiff (1972), p. 9.

of resources.⁵⁵ The accompanying lack of certainty about the nature and extent of physical resources led the participants to call again at this point for patterns of resource use and management which would assure the availability of resources to those yet unborn.⁵⁶ This concern for future generations was cited as an "ethical basis" which could guide technological innovation, the evaluation of possible technological applications, the formation of a conservation ethic, and, a program of public education which would enable community participation in choosing and funding technologies.⁵⁷ Value change was advocated as one alternative to technological change in stimulating reductions in resource use and environmental abuse: instead of modifying cars to reduce noise and air pollution, modify human attitudes to reduce use of the vehicles.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Cardiff (1972), p. 9. There are those who maintain that technological innovation will obviate the need for concern about resource exhaustion. The Church and Society discussions have, however, emphasized the profound impression which the growing awareness of the finite nature of the earth, its resources and absorptive capacities made on many participants in the discussions.

⁵⁶Cardiff (1972), p. 10.

⁵⁷Cardiff (1972), p. 10.

⁵⁸Cardiff (1972), p. 10.

The final section of the report gave explicit attention to a point-of-view of the Third World. Concern was expressed over the impact of western technology in "less developed" countries as seen in the creation of indigenous elites who benefit greatly, but who show little or no concern for the rights and needs of their nations and peoples.⁵⁹

The latter point notwithstanding, the Cardiff consultation was dominated by the western environmentalist-ecologist perspective. The growing awareness of implications of the finite nature of creation conditioned the choice of topics and perspectives of address. Resource limitations and physical constraints provided an unobstructed horizon for discussion. The right of future generations to have access to non-renewable resources, while not exclusively advocated, overshadowed concern for the primacy of use of resources to meet the needs of those now living.

Regional Perspectives

The three regional conferences held in conjunction with the Futurum touched upon issues related to sustainability in varying ways. The West African

⁵⁹Cardiff (1972), p. 11.

conference, meeting in Accra, focused on social, political and economic factors related to technological development and application. Absent from the report are any references to environmental and ecological concerns or the rights and needs of future generations which had characterized previous Futurum discussions. Criteria for the use of appropriate technology in Africa were set down and nations were encouraged to depend upon and make optimal use of resources readily available in their own areas.⁶⁰

The Asian Conference report contained references reminiscent of earlier Futurum discussions. "Asian peoples," it was asserted, "need to work out a new understanding of the relationship between man and the natural environment."⁶¹ Human responsibility to "use, conserve and replenish" the environment in an attitude of stewardship was advocated along with the responsibility to "adopt consumption patterns which take into account the needs of future generations."⁶² Destruction of the environment, exhaustion of resources and "enslavement by materialism" were cited as characteristics of over-development, and the possibility of developing nations

⁶⁰Accra (1972), p. 342.

⁶¹Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 32.

⁶²Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 32.

helping the developed nations discover more meaningful and creative modes of living was proposed.⁶³ "Relevant technology, the report concluded, should include dimensions which would maximize employment opportunities without wasting resources or damaging the environment."⁶⁴ The delegates also expressed their feeling for "the urgent necessity to search for an Asian theology of man and society, nature and technology, as the basis for a new Christian approach to economic and social goals."⁶⁵

One theme which was woven throughout the report of the North-American-European conference held at Pont-a-Mousson emphasized the particular responsibility of the industrialized, affluent nations to modify their patterns of resource use. This was reflected early in the report in the articulation of the principle of "proportional responsibility": "those countries which use the most resources or which use them most destructively have the greatest responsibility to compensate for the excesses and to make good the damage."⁶⁶ Repeated calls were issued to the industrialized countries to reduce their consumption

⁶³Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 33.

⁶⁴Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 34.

⁶⁵Kuala Lumpur (1973), p. 36.

⁶⁶Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 2.

of the world's natural resources.⁶⁷ The assertion was also made that material growth in the industrialized countries must cease.⁶⁸ However, it was indicated in a footnote that there was not unanimous agreement on the nature or implications of that statement.⁶⁹ In discussing the "Limits to Growth Debate in World Perspective" the Pont-a-Mousson delegates did agree that "at the present moment the concept of retarding growth is valid only for the rich countries."⁷⁰ Major sections of this report, as with others in the Futurum Study, were devoted to describing the necessity for and methods of redirecting technological research to facilitate the distribution of wealth, and conserve resources and reduce environmental damage.⁷¹

A somewhat different basis of concern appeared to have been guiding African reflection in comparison to the Asian and Western positions. The African report reflected a primary concern with social, political, economic issues.

⁶⁷Pont-a-Mousson (1973), pp. 4, 10.

⁶⁸Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 10.

⁶⁹Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 10.

⁷⁰Pont-a-Mousson (1973), p. 2.

⁷¹Pont-a-Mousson (1973), pp. 4-7, 9.

Interest in technology revolved around the identification and development of technologies appropriate to the African setting. The Asian consultation addressed a number of concerns which more closely paralleled the earlier Futurum discussions such as the development of less destructive technologies, the need to conserve resources and protect the environment, a concern for future generations and expression of the need for theological exploration of the relation between humanity and nature. The open critique of a value system dominated by materialism had gone unspoken (or at least unrecorded) for many years in World Council discussion. The recognition that Asian cultures might be able to help the "developed" peoples discover more creative values and styles of life had positive potential. The North American-European conference emphasis on the need for industrialized nations to modify resource use patterns represented an interesting progression in the debates. A certain coalition of concerns was evidenced in the Pont-a-Mousson report bringing together the awarenesses of the destructive nature of many technologies, the growing appreciation of the finiteness of creation, and a concern for the rights and needs of the Third World peoples and nations. This led to the conclusion that resource use, and perhaps attendant material growth, must

be reduced in the industrialized nations without extending the same requirement to Third World nations.

Limited Resources: Theological Questions

The working group on theology which met at Zurich in mid-1973 raised a significant theological issue concerning the relation between the awareness of the limits of nature and the threat posed to the rest of creation and to humanity itself by catastrophically destructive technologies and environmental disruption on the one hand, and the traditional Christian hope and expectation for the future on the other hand.⁷² In short, it was suggested that the limitations imposed by the former called into question the possibilities extended by the latter in ways which could not be ignored:⁷³

Can 'hope' for the future, so basic for Christian faith, be realistic and credible in the face of the ecological crisis we seem to face? Can a futurist theology related intrinsically to the historical future, continue to be either credible or consistent

⁷²Zurich (1973), p. 6.

⁷³Zurich (1973), p. 6. A number of questions familiar to the Futurum discussions were raised, but not answered, in relation to this theological perspective: the meaning of liberation in relation to nature's future; the demands of the contemporary poor on limited resources versus the rights of future generations; and, the meaning of quality of life in relation not only to justice but also to a threatened nature. See also p. 7.

within itself if it is related only (as it has been in the past) to its grounds in the Biblical tradition, ignoring the limitations imposed by nature's future probabilities? . . . We do not here assume the accuracy of the many gloomy ecological prognostications. We do, however, recognize that they are weighty enough to pose a serious problem not only for our political and economic planning but also for any theology concerned with society's future history.

The report went on to conclude that theology's "legitimate concern for justice and liberation in society (and so in history) must include a corresponding concern for the resources of the new world."⁷⁴ The primary intention of this segment of the report was to introduce the issues posed by the limits of the threats to nature as a serious and essential element in theological reflection.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Zurich (1973), p. 6.

⁷⁵At the same time another theological debate concerning nature was raging within the context of the Futurum Study, but outside its formal consultations and conferences. The major protagonists were Thomas Derr, author of Ecology and Human Liberation, a book published by the World Council on theology and ecological issues, and Charles Birch and John Cobb. Derr represented a more "traditional, western" view which located the value of non-human creation as primarily in terms of its utility to the human community. Birch and Cobb, arguing from the perspective of process philosophy, maintained that non-human creation has inherent, intrinsic value independent of its usefulness to humanity and, therefore, it also can be said to have a right of its own to exist.

A New Ecumenical Vision

As noted in the introduction to this chapter it was at the summary conference held at Bucharest in 1974 that the concept of sustainability entered World Council discussions. Paul Abrecht has indicated that the conference developed the concept of the sustainable society "based on the evident need to see the world's economic possibilities and its material requirements in some kind of equilibrium"⁷⁶ After years of debate in Church and Society discussions about the appropriateness of a Christian ideology and utopia to guide thinking about the future the Bucharest delegates answered in the affirmative as the title to the introduction of the report, *A New Ecumenical Vision of the Future*" indicated.⁷⁷ The earlier optimism characterized by a faith in the power of technology and unlimited economic growth was called into question by a "sobering return to reality" which indicated a need to conserve resources and reduce expectations in economic growth.⁷⁸ Natural limits to

⁷⁶Paul Abrecht, "An Ecumenical Vision of the Future." Anticipation, No. 18 (August 1974), p. 4.

⁷⁷Bucharest (1974), p. 5.

⁷⁸Bucharest (1974), p. 5

growth and accompanying economic and life-style constraints were accepted as givens in the present and for far into future.⁷⁹

The concept of the sustainable society was initially set forth in Part One of the report, "The Significance for the Future of Pressures of Technology and Population on Environment, and of Natural Limits to Growth."⁸⁰ Section V of Part One explored "A Long-Term Concept of A Sustainable and Just Society" under the headings: (A) Improving the quality of life; (B) The sustainable society; and, (C) The urgently needed transition.⁸¹ The nature and determination of the quality of life had been a frequently discussed topic within the Futurum Study.⁸²

⁷⁹Bucharest (1974), pp. 7, 10, 12. This point is of particular importance since the advocates of large scale growth and the belief in the ability of technological innovation to out pace natural limitations may be heard within World Council debates and certainly in the political and economic arenas.

⁸⁰Bucharest (1974), p. 7.

⁸¹Bucharest (1974), p. 12. The Draft Report of the conference spoke only of "A Long Term Global Strategy for a Sustainable Society," omitting the inclusion of justice at that point. The Central Committee Minutes of the August 1974 meeting contained one reference to the further exploration of "the socio-economic and ethical implications of the idea of a sustainable and just society." The published version of the Bucharest report showed the combination of the two concepts. Exactly when and how this occurred or why the draft was edited to include this expansion is not clear.

⁸²For a detailed analysis of this concept within the Futurum see Lindquist.

At Bucharest two significant dimensions of the Futurum discussions were included in the concept of sustainability within the context of quality of life. The first of these was a concern for the rights of future generations extending at least to the grandchildren of the conference delegates.⁸³ The second was the reaffirmation of the principle that "the world wide quality of life will be increased by material growth among the poor and by stabilization and possibly contraction among the rich."⁸⁴ The substance of the section on the sustainable society was included in the introduction to this chapter. Section C spoke of the urgent need to begin the transition to a sustainable society in light of existing levels of pollution, knowledge of limits, growing populations, and the slow response and change rate inherent in our institutions and structures.⁸⁵

Part Six of the Bucharest Report addressed "The Theological Understanding of Humanity and Nature in a Technological Era."⁸⁶ It represented a preliminary

⁸³Bucharest (1974), p. 12.

⁸⁴Bucharest (1974), p. 12.

⁸⁵Bucharest (1974), p. 12.

⁸⁶Bucharest (1974), p. 33.

response to the questions surrounding a contemporary understanding of nature and its relationship to humanity. The possibility of conceiving inherent worth in all creation was reflected in the affirmation that "in the Christian experience of the oneness of God's creation, of the wonder and value of each of its parts, is latent the possibility of a new care for the earth and its creatures."⁸⁷ Section II of the report focused on the "Ecological Crisis and a Theology of Creation" and called for more creative dialogue between faith and science and for the rejection of "the intellectual arrogance, dualism and aloofness" of humanity over against nature.⁸⁸ Part Six concluded with a recommendation for an extended study of "the theological implications of 'a sustainable and just society'."⁸⁹

The concept of sustainability was not greeted enthusiastically by everyone at Bucharest. The draft report contained a footnote indicating that "the participants discussed at length possible alternatives to the term 'sustainable society'."⁹⁰ Further insight into that debate was provided by Paul Abrecht's observation

⁸⁷Bucharest (1974), p. 34.

⁸⁸Bucharest (1974), p. 34.

⁸⁹Bucharest (1974), p. 36.

⁹⁰Bucharest (1974), Draft Report, p. 25.

that "for some, especially those from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the idea of the sustainable society suggested a too static and mechanistic approach to social problems and the future."⁹¹

A Primary Goal: Meeting Human Need

The concept of the sustainable society was given its debut at the 1975 Nairobi Assembly.⁹² The report of section six of the Assembly incorporated the concept in its discussion of social responsibility in a technological age. A sustainable global society was initially described as a society,⁹³

in which science and technology will be mobilized to meet the basic physical and spiritual needs of people, to minimize human suffering, and to create

⁹¹Abrecht, "Ecumenical Vision . . .", p. 4. As noted at several points earlier in the present study, tension and disagreement had existed for many years within World Council gatherings between Third World participants emphasizing issues related to justice and political economic oppression and First World delegates who focused attention primarily on the implications of developments related to science and technology. In Chapter six it will be seen that this debate was to continue to characterize the JPSS discussions.

⁹²In a sense this was literally true due to the fact that the concept was introduced to the assembly in Charles Birch's captivating address, "Creation, Technology and Human Survival: Called to Replenish the Earth," The Ecumenical Review, XXVIII, (January 1976), 66-79.

⁹³Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 125.

an environment which can sustain a decent quality of life for all people.

The transition to a sustainable society was portrayed as essential to human survival.⁹⁴ In examining ethical problems involved in that transition the report outlined the elements relevant to developed and developing countries:⁹⁵

For the developed countries it means in the first instance a sustainable core of economic activity relating to patterns of indigenous resource consumption, for example land use, food supply, and energy production, in a far longer time frame than suggested by trends in current commodity markets. It implies a substantial reallocation of power controlling the patterns of world trade in essential resources. It also implies increased participation by workers in the decision making process in industry. For the developing countries, it means emphasis on production for essential human needs, including food and energy; the search for the technologies which will guarantee this result, and which will at the same time avoid a continuing dependence on technologies imported from industrialized countries, which is in direct conflict with social and cultural identity.

Although the Nairobi report still placed heavy emphasis on resource use and technology in relation to sustainability, it was clearly indicated that these must work to the end of meeting basic human need and establishing equity within the world community. The report concluded that "the basic goal remains: nobody should increase his affluence until everybody has his essentials."⁹⁶

⁹⁴Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 125.

⁹⁵Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 27-28.

⁹⁶Official Report, 5th Assembly, p. 128.

SUMMARY

A broad spectrum of issues related to the concept of sustainability emerged in the early ecumenical discussions and pre-Futurum study period in the World Council. These included concerns for:

- (1) The right of all persons to have access to the basic resources essential to support life;
- (2) The availability of essential resources for future as well as present generations;
- (3) A creative relationship between humanity and nature;
- (4) Wise use and conservation of natural resources; especially soil and water;
- (5) The negative impact of the creation of unlimited wants and consumerism;
- (6) The pervasive influence of science and technology on society and the tremendous, and at times apparently uncontrollable, momentum which they exert;
- (7) The potential of technology to dehumanize life;
- (8) The threat posed by some technologies to the continuation of the human community;
- (9) The political and economic structures which mitigate conservation and the creative use of resources;

(10) New insight and understandings of nature and the relation of the human community to it;

(11) More creative dynamics in the relationship between science and faith;

(12) The absence of an operative ethical basis to guide decisions about science and technology.

Over the years these and related concerns provided the context out of which the Futurum Study and the concept of sustainability emerged.

The generative force behind the concept of the sustainable society was the profound shift in world view which occurred in the early nineteen seventies among some of the participants in the Church and Society discussions. Perspectives were turned upside down and radically shaken by the growing awareness of the finite nature of the earth and many of its resources. Creation and human activity in it were often no longer seen in the same way. Where at one time a phrase such as "the sky is the limit" indicated wide open possibility, it now could evoke a reminder that through heating of the atmosphere and disruption of the ozone layer the sky might truly prove to be the limiting factor for life.

This fundamental change in the understanding of the nature of the earth - from an inexhaustable supplier of human needs and desires to a finite system with many

finite resources - was accompanied by the emergence of the limits-to-growth principle. Simply put, this principle was a natural extrapolation from the "new" world view. If the ecosystem is finite and at points fragile and vulnerable then there are limits to the amount of pollution which can be absorbed and cleansed from the system without seriously damaging it; the possibility of exhausting or destroying finite resources such as petroleum or soil does exist. Thus, it was proposed that certain limits-to-growth, or physical constraints, do exist and that responsible planning and styles of living must take these into consideration. Related to this was an emphasis on the negative impact of many technologies in promoting the waste of resources and/or their destruction.⁹⁷

Within the course of the World Council discussions a pattern of emphasis of varying interpretations of technology and its relation to nature emerged. Table 4 summarizes these trends. From Amsterdam to Nairobi

⁹⁷There were, however, those who maintained an enthusiastic optimism in the power of technology to surmount major obstacles and limitations. Advocates of this persuasion proposed continued efforts to maximize the creation of wealth through growth oriented policies which would benefit all and which would, according to them, stimulate technologically developed substitutes for scarce resources and technological innovations which would continue to render the environment inhabitable.

a general movement occurred from an attitude characterized by an appreciation for both the positive contributions and the destructive impact of technology, through a period of intense optimism about the power of technology to satisfy all human need, to a return to an awareness of the dual nature of technology with an emphasis on its destructive dimensions and a call for its close control. In one sense, the change in world view and the focus on limits-to-growth had led to the embracing of some old concerns albeit for some radically new reasons.

Table 4

Interpretations of Technology and Its
Relation to Nature

	TECHNOLOGY	NATURE
Amsterdam	Promise and problem	Understand and co-operate
Evanston	Potentially destructive	Master
New Delhi	The hope of the future	Master and control
Uppsala	The hope of the future	Master and steward
Nairobi	A tool to be closely controlled and used to meet human need	Participation in restoration and preservation

The Futurum Study not only incorporated a number of earlier concerns, it also produced a number of new emphases which related to the emergence of the concept of the sustainable society. A number of these resulted from implications stemming from the new world-view. Others, while sharing that base were of a more theological nature and could be traced, in part, to the interest in exploring new concepts of human and non-human creation. Among these were:

(1) The ecological principle: The conviction that all things exist only in relation to other things and cannot be understood or examined apart from their relationships.

(2) The inherent value of all creation: The principle asserting that non-human creation has value in and of itself. Thus, its worth is not dependent on instrumental value to humanity.

(3) The vulnerability of creation: The deepened awareness that creation is not only finite, but also that through weapons of mass destruction or through excessive consumption and disruption and destruction of the ecosystem the environment could be reduced to a state that would no longer support human life. This principle was used to question traditional Christian confidence in hope for the future.

(4) Value change: Although changing values was certainly not a new concept, the substitution of altered values for technological innovation was suggested. This could have profound implications for the development and application of technologies.⁹⁸

(5) Proportional responsibility: The principle maintaining that those who use the most resources and have the greatest negative impact on the environment have the greatest responsibility to reduce consumption and promote restoration. It was in relation to this principle that it was asserted that material growth in rich nations should be arrested or reversed and that it should be accelerated in the poor nations.

The initial opposition of representatives from the Third World to the concept of the sustainable society has been noted. Three factors figured significantly in that resistance. The first was the feeling by many that resource abuse and environmental disruption were primarily problems of the affluent societies, and that the domination of discussions with these issues was simply another attempt by the rich to impose their agenda on the

⁹⁸This issue of value change was given an essential role in the transition to a just and sustainable society: "it was agreed that basic to this search for a new society was a new non-material understanding of the quality of life." See "Ecumenical Vision . . .," p. 5.

world.⁹⁹ The second centered on the belief that a focus on "environmental" issues ignored the essential concern for justice and the meeting of basic needs which was a high priority of the poorer nations.¹⁰⁰ The third factor foresaw a denial, by default or by design, of access by poor nations to certain "high" technologies and their attendant power and or life styles.¹⁰¹ The second and third factors in particular were also related to interpretation of the limits-to-growth concept among Third World representatives. This undoubtedly also gave rise to the emphasis on limiting the affluent and accelerating growth among the poor which was often repeated in the closing conferences of the Futurum Study.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Benjamin Nwosu, "The Quality of Life and Technological Options," Anticipation No. 17 (May 1974), 32; Samuel Parmar, "Ethical Guidelines and Social Options After the Limits to Growth Debate," Anticipation No. 18 (August 1974), 20.

¹⁰⁰ Julio de Santa Ana, Bucharest (1974), Paper No. 8, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰¹ Nwosu, p. 32.

¹⁰² Lindquist provided a brief analysis of the concept of the sustainable society in order to contrast it with the focus on self-reliance by representatives from the third world. He characterized the sustainable society as: (1) ecologically based; (2) markedly futuristic; (3) ignoring political variables or giving them secondary importance; (4) a global model; and, (5) cyclical and therefore unable to explain or facilitate purposeful social action. Lindquist, p. 98.

The skepticism and opposition of many Third World delegates does not appear totally unfounded in light of the theme of the Futurum Study, "The Future of Man in a World of Science-based Technology," and the emphasis in many conferences on questions of the control of sophisticated technology, over consumption of non-renewable resources, and environmental destruction and pollution.¹⁰³ As the study progressed increased attention was given to the development of creative technology in Third World nations and the impact of technologies on the peoples of those countries. While the theme of the study naturally led to a focus on issues of science and technology it must be remembered that the initial formulation of the concept of the sustainable society presented at Bucharest included as the first characteristic the concern for distributive justice and the necessity of community participation in making decisions.

In the early stage of its formation the concept of sustainability was characterized by:

(1) A world view emphasizing the finite nature of creation and accompanying belief in limits to growth.

¹⁰³In analysing the Geneva Conference Nwosu concluded that "the immediate concerns of the 1970 Geneva Conference were problems arising from over-affluence" Nwosu, p. 32.

(2) An image of humanity which stressed the need for the human community to discover and fulfill a positive role in the context of all creation.

(3) An affirmation of the inherent value of all creation.

(4) A global perspective with an awareness of the need for regional differentiation.¹⁰⁴

(5) A long-term perspective intended to guide both current and long range planning.

(6) A commitment to improve the quality of life among the poor and to sustain that quality.

(7) A firm conviction that the development and application of technology in modern society must be controlled and redirected to conserve resources, preserve the environment and enhance the quality of life.

¹⁰⁴"The search for a global human community, in which technology is a means of fulfillment rather than alienation does not imply that there is a single vision for the achievement of a sustainable, just and participatory society determining further technological development throughout the world." Brief attention was then given to some possible regional variations in Asia, Africa and Latin America." Report of the Central Committee to the 5th Assembly, p. 116.

PART III

THE CONCEPT OF A JUST, PARTICIPATORY
AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

PART III

INTRODUCTION

A concern for justice, variously interpreted, has been a consistent theme throughout the ecumenical discussions under consideration in the present study (c.f. Chapter 3). The emphasis on broad based participation as an essential part of creative human life has grown in the course of those discussions (c.f. Chapter 4). These concerns were yoked together by the 1968 Zagorsk consultation in its attempts "to clarify the world-wide aspiration for more justice, more participation and more meaning for human life in society."¹

Elements of the concept of sustainability had emerged over the years in ecumenical dialogue. In the early 1970s, however, certain "new" perceptions entered the Church and Society discussions focusing on science and technology which led to the articulation of the concept of the sustainable society at Bucharest (c.f. Chapter 5). Between the Bucharest Conference and the Nairobi Assembly two interesting developments occurred. The first was the prompt and official addition of the concept of justice to ideal of the sustainable society.

¹Zagorsk (1968), p. 74.

The second, which must have gone unnoticed for sometime, was the inclusion in the preparatory volume for the Nairobi Assembly of a solitary reference to "a sustainable" just and participatory society."²

The purpose of this part of the present study is to trace the formulation of the concept of the Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society within the World Council of Churches from 1975 to 1980.

²Report of the Central Committee to the 5th Assembly, p. 116.

Chapter 6

DEVELOPMENT AND ARTICULATION OF THE CONCEPT

The discussion of JPSS concept within the World Council during 1975-1980 was conducted primarily by two groups: the sub-unit on Church and Society and the JPSS Advisory Committee created by the Central Committee. In this chapter the development of those discussions will be traced. Chronological organization will be followed in order to demonstrate clearly the often diverse directions in which the contemporary discussions moved. Attention will be given to: definition of the three terms in the JPSS concept and the emphasis placed on these in the discussions; attempts to separate or relate those three terms; and, the differing perspectives on and approaches to the JPSS concept as a whole.

PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT

The Search for a Name

The mandate for continued attention to the concept of a just and sustainable society was issued by the Nairobi

Assembly.¹ The sub-unit on Church and Society promptly demonstrated its interest in pursuing the subject in its report to the Executive Committee meeting in March, 1976.² Concern was expressed over the length and adequacy of the theme as proposed at Nairobi; three areas of study were outlined, Energy and Resources Problems, Appropriate (Sustainable) Technology, and Science and Faith; and, the reformulation of Christian social ethics was proposed as a common project for the various World Council Units.³

The Review Committee's report of its May 1976 meeting provided the first post-Nairobi application of

¹Both the Program Guidelines Committee and the Report of the hearing on Unit I emphasized the need for continued consideration of various dimensions of a just and sustainable society. Official Report, 5th Assembly, pp. 299, 303.

²At this point the emphasis was not upon the just and sustainable society, however. The report addressed "Assembly Recommendations in the Area of Science, Technology and Society," revealing perhaps the central concern of the sub-unit. Executive Committee, March 22-26, 1976, Geneva, Document No. 1, pp. 10-11. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

³Executive Committee, March 22-26, 1976, Document No. 1, pp. 10-11. See Appendix C for the text of the report.

the term "a just participatory and sustainable society."⁴
 It is not clear what gave rise to this formulation of the concept in that report. From that point on, however, the JPSS configuration began to appear in various reports with greater frequency until its formal acceptance by the Central Committee.⁵

A Program is Drafted

In May of 1976 the Church and Society Working Group met at Glion, Switzerland. Two major items were on the agenda: a consultation on energy for a just and sustainable society, with special consideration being given to the debate about nuclear energy; and, the formulation of a five year study program for the sub-unit

⁴Review Committee, May 9-13, 1976, Preliminary Report, p. 5. The term was applied in the context of a critique of Church and Society operations which emphasized the need of the sub-unit to relate its programs to existing "action oriented" programs. The Church and Society report to the March Executive Committee was especially challenged with the assertion that the concern for a JPSS "should be explored not only in terms of social ethics, but also regarding the scientific and technological dimensions of modern life."

⁵Church and Society continued to cling to the just and sustainable society formulation for some time. The Bucharest draft report was changed by its Church and Society editors to add justice to sustainability before the report was published. However when the report of the working group meeting of May 1976 was officially published in November it did not include "participation" in its title formulation. See Glion (1976), pp. 2-6, 29-36.

on "The Contribution of Faith, Science, and Technology in the Struggle for a Just and Sustainable Society."⁶

The consultation report indicated the need to develop a consensus on what sustainable really means, and provided its answer by drawing three scenarios the last of which made it quite clear that sustainability is concerned with long term perspectives.⁷

The program proposal developed at Glion opened with the assertion that the creation of a just and sustainable social order is the only alternative to global catastrophe.⁸ Table 5 provides an outline of the program. Dimensions of justice and ecology were discussed.⁹

The twin issues around which the world's future evolves are justice and ecology. "Justice" points to the necessity of correcting mal-distribution of the products of the earth and of bridging the gap between rich and poor countries. "Ecology" points to humanities dependence upon the earth.

⁶Glion (1976), pp. 29-36.

⁷Glicn (1976), p. 2.

⁸Glion (1976), p. 29.

⁹Glion (1976), p. 29. Neither of these definitions reflected the depth of the development of thought reached at the end of the Futurum Study. See Chapters 3 and 5 above.

An attempt was made to establish a relationship between justice and sustainability:¹⁰

Society must be so organized as to sustain the earth so that a sufficient quality of material and cultural life for humanity may itself be sustained indefinitely. A sustainable society which is unjust can hardly be worth sustaining. A just society that is unsustainable is self-defeating.

The basic understanding of the sustainable society set forth at Bucharest in 1974 was reiterated along with the assertion that new understandings should emerge concerning "(1) the role of science and technology in human affairs and (2) the meaning and purpose of creation and the place of science and technology in relation to it."¹¹ A fairly dynamic concept of participation was envisioned which would transcend voting and involve persons and groups in sharing power and devising "new ways of production and distribution, consonant with justice and sustainability."¹²

¹⁰Glion (1976), p. 29. This statement and the preceding definition of justice indicated waning concern for the rights of non-human creation. For example entire species considered "non-essential" to human existence could, under this rubric, be eliminated by default or design.

¹¹Glion (1976), pp. 29-30.

¹²Glion (1976), p. 30.

TABLE 5

Outline of the Proposed Church and Society Program

1976-1981 Glion, Switzerland May 15-20, 1976

-
- I. The Nature of the Just and Sustainable Global Society
 - II. Ethical, Economic and Political Problems in the Transition to a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society
 - III. Scientific and Technical Problems and the Ethical Issues Involved in the Transition to a Just and Sustainable Society
 - A. Risk assessment and appropriate technology
 - B. Agricultural technology and the food crisis
 - C. Energy for a Just and Sustainable Society
 - D. Allocation of resource beyond the control of national governments
 - E. National and private ownership of resources
 - IV. Science and Faith and the Vision of a New Society
 - A. Theological and Ethical Dilemmas in the Biological Manipulation of Human Life
 - B. Science, Ideology and Faith: A Critical Evaluation of World Views

In short, the proposal continued the pursuit of general themes which had come to characterize Church and Society discussions over the years: a concern for the control of the development and application of technology to protect the environment and enhance the quality of human life; and, the on going dialogue between science and faith. A new emphasis did appear in the focus on energy in general and nuclear questions in particular.

The committee did at various points reflect concern for problems of the poor nations and individuals. The discussion on technology and food included the call for the "development of appropriate food technologies that are ecologically sound and compatible with self-reliant development" in order to meet the needs of the projected five billion people who will be living in the tropics by the year two thousand.¹³

The proposal for a world conference on the Just and Sustainable Society to be organized by the sub-unit on Church and Society emerged at Glion.¹⁴ The report also included a recommendation that a prospectus on the just and sustainable society program be produced.¹⁵

¹³Glion (1976), p. 31. This stood also as an example of the application of a long-term perspective to the immediate and future needs of the poor as well as the rich. The relevance to immediate need must be assumed since such technologies would need to be applied now and expanded in order to be effective within twenty-five years.

¹⁴Glion (1976), p. 31

¹⁵Glion (1976), p. 31. This document was never produced; a major obstacle to its completion was the depth of dissention with the World Council over JPSS in general and sustainability in particular.

TENSIONS EMERGE

Two events in August of 1976 provided examples of the type of debate and dissention which would characterize World Council discussions on the JPSS. They also provided insight into the ways in which the "public" discussions of JPSS would be managed.

The Central Committee, meeting in August, 1976 affirmed the concern of the Nairobi Assembly by making "The Struggle for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" one of the four major World Council emphases during the period up to the next assembly.¹⁶ The introduction of the theme to the Central Committee was made by Harry de Lange representing Church and Society and Aaron Tolen representing CCIA/CCPD.¹⁷ De Lange emphasized

¹⁶Central Committee Aug. 10-18, 1976, Geneva, Doc. 13. "Report of the Review Committee" W.C.C. Archives, Geneva, pp. 2-3. This decision was to have significant political ramifications within the World Council for it, in effect, opened the door for JPSS to become a Council-wide concern rather than the exclusive province of Church and Society. Thus, major disagreements on the meaning of JPSS among the units could in some ways effect the operation of the program as a W.C.C inter-unit emphasis.

¹⁷Central Committee, Minutes, 29th, (1976), p. 16. The very fact that the various sub-units felt it necessary to have their own presenter to emphasize their points of view was an initial indication of the significantly different emphasis and interpretations given the theme.

the increasing use of and credence given to the concept of sustainability, but noted the need for a "world of justice and righteousness," while Tolen advocated an action-reflection mode of operation and spoke of "another kind of development in the world whose objectives were self-reliance, social justice and the improvement of living conditions."¹⁸

This tension was further reflected in the report of the CCPD core meeting being held contemporaneously with the Central Committee meeting. Repeated references were made to the need to seek a just and participatory society, and the tenor of the report emphasized the historical interest of the World Council in issues of justice and participation and the primacy of these concerns in many contemporary settings.¹⁹

While the CCPD and others were resisting the JPSS concept the sub-unit on Church and Society was moving towards its institutionalization through the World Council administrative machinery. As noted, the acceptance of JPSS as a general emphasis was ratified by the Central

¹⁸Central Committee, Minutes, 29th, 1976, p. 16.

¹⁹W.C.C., Program Unit Justice and Service, Committee Meeting, Geneva, Aug. 10-18, 1976. Document No. 4. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

Committee. At that same meeting two Church and Society proposals were accepted: to make the theme posed at Nairobi, with the addition of participation to the title, the central focus for the sub-unit; and to make the main task of the sub-unit the organization of a World Conference on a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society.²⁰

In November of 1976 the World Council held a "week of meetings" to facilitate staff discussion. One item on the agenda was a plenary discussion on the Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society. By placing this item on the agenda it was hoped that the process of inter-unit dialogue and understanding about JPSS would be furthered.²¹ Three short papers were prepared and distributed prior to the meetings: On Justice, by Diogo de Gaspar;

²⁰Central Committee Minutes, 29th (1976), pp. 28-29. Over the years Church and Society has demonstrated an impressive mastery of W.C.C. political procedure which enabled the ratification of its objectives. The major proposal for a five year study drafted by the Church and Society working group in May no doubt greatly strengthened its hand in securing Central Committee approval of these recommendations. Authorization for two consultations, one on faith and science and the other on energy for a just and sustainable society, was also given.

²¹Paul Abrecht, sub-unit on Church and Society, personal interview, Geneva, January 14, 1981.

On Participation, by George Todd; and On Sustainability, by Paul Abrecht.²² Whether or not the intended objective was achieved the three papers provided insight into the dramatically different perspectives on and approaches to the JPSS theme within the World Council. Both de Gaspar and Todd questioned the value of holding a major world conference on the theme.²³ At the heart of de Gaspar's critique was a fundamental difference of approach and perspective from that which characterized Church and Society discussions:²⁴

Any approach to "Justice" starts from a particular perception of one situation as it is, realistically identifying the elements of justice that are present, in contrast to a particular vision of what the situation ought to be.

Thus, a world conference might facilitate the more elaborate definition of a vision of what ought to be, but it could not deal effectively with realizing justice. The closing paragraph of de Gaspar's paper provided a clear

²²W.C.C Week of Meetings Nov. 1-5, 1976. "Towards A Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society," Three papers for the plenary discussion on Wednesday, November 3, 1976. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

²³Week of Meetings (1976), pp. 2-3.

²⁴Week of Meetings (1976), p. 2. While this perspective had at times been voiced in the context of Church and Society discussions it never became the guiding operative principle.

summary of one of the basic dismissals of sustainability:²⁵

This approach would also lead us to a discussion, for instance, of the historical development of and ideology of thrift versus development, of consumer societies as pretended forms of popular participation. The end result of these is the world wide gap between poor and rich, with its consequent phenomena of affluence and wasteful technology leading to a rate of utilization of resources that has created the discussions on limits to growth, zero growth, the ecological crisis, transnationality of production, quality of life, life styles, etc., most of them very relevant for the affluent world, but rather sterile for the real problems of overcoming poverty in the under-developed world.

In essence, the concern for sustainability was dismissed as irrelevant to the primary issue of overcoming poverty.

Todd questioned the validity of a world conference on the grounds that it would not be truly participatory.²⁶

Cadres of professional and scientific elite would attend such a conference, but authentic participation would require the involvement of a broader constituency including: "(1) The membership of the churches. (2) The masses of dis-possessed and powerless people who are victims of unjust structures and oppression, and particularly those

²⁵Week of Meetings (1976), p. 4. In his analysis of factors giving rise to limits to growth, etc. de Gaspar failed to mention the growing awareness of the finite nature of creation which not only was a primary factor at work with those mentioned by him, but which has definite immediate and long term implications for poor and rich alike.

²⁶Week of Meetings (1976), p. 3.

who suffer from economic poverty."²⁷ A variety of interpretations of participation was presented (see Appendix D), but Todd concluded that "full participation is achieved when people sit as equals, or have clearly delegated and instructed representatives, and structures for popular accountability."²⁸ After discussing the propensity of the powerful to decide "for" others Todd asserted that it is neither right nor reasonable to rely on the beneficence of others because "those holding economic and political power will not act against their own self interest on behalf of justice to the poor and the even more abstract survival of the earth."²⁹

Abrecht presented three considerations directly related to sustainability: "(a) Depletion of natural resources in sheer physical terms; (b) The vulnerability of society to natural and man-made disasters resulting from large-scale complex technology; and, (c) the question of the 'spiritual' sustainability of modern

²⁷Week of Meetings (1976), p. 3. The note stuck here by Todd differs sharply from de Vries highly positive evaluation of the participatory nature of ecumenical dialogues. See Preston, pp. 48-49.

²⁸Week of Meetings (1976), p. 4.

²⁹Week of Meetings (1976), p. 3.

technological society."³⁰ Three "theological-ethical" questions were then posed:³¹

- (a) Are the claims for a just society and for a sustainable society reconcilable?
- (b) Is there a conflict between the goal of a participatory society and the emphasis on the role of expertise and technical knowledge in defining a sustainable technological system.
- (c) What stand are the churches to take where it appears that further scientific and technological advance in certain areas can be achieved only at the price of presently incalculable risks?

These three papers have been quoted at length because they provide vivid insight into the nature and depth of the division within the World Council over the approach to social issues in general and over the nature of JPSS in particular.³² The Todd and de Gaspar papers revealed an approach to JPSS characterized by:

- (1) An affirmation of the primacy of the poor and oppressed;
- (2) An emphasis on praxis (action-reflection) as the method by which to understand and address issues;
- (3) A commitment to the involvement of all persons,

³⁰Week of Meetings (1976), p. 5.

³¹Week of Meetings (1976), p. 5. Abrecht concluded in respect to question "a" that "Now they appear to converge."

³²This division could be described as the difference between Church and Society on the one hand and CCPD, CCIA, PCR and other sub-units in Unit II on the other.

especially the poor and oppressed, in analyzing situations and making decisions; and, (4) dismissal of sustainability as an idea resulting from the irresponsibility of the rich world and a diversion for the rich to pursue. Sustainability would prove neither compelling to the rich nor relevant to the poor.

Abrecht's paper reflected a position dominated by concern for: (1) resource depletion; (2) control of high technology; (3) spiritual deterioration in technological societies; and, (4) reconciliation of the three elements in the JPSS concept.³³ Table 6 (p. 230) presents a summary of the two approaches to the JPSS theme. The categories are somewhat sterotypical, but they reflect the basic concerns of the two perspectives. While Church and Society placed strong emphasis on

³³Abrecht's concern to harmonize the three elements revealed no serious consideration of the Todd-de Gaspar perspective. The argument on justice (regardless of its validity) focused on semantics rather than the condition of the oppressed. The concern for participation was related to a high technology "modern" society issue.

sustainability it also acknowledged the need for justice and participation.³⁴

STRUGGLES FOR DEFINITION

At the World Council Executive Committee meeting in February of 1977 a brief report was presented which summarized some of the basic conclusions of the inter-unit staff discussions on JPSS during the previous year: (i) the title was too technical; (ii) the program calls for comprehensive analysis recognizing the complexity of the present situation; (iii) it is not possible to focus the total concern in one world conference.³⁵ A primary value of the program was attributed to the opportunity it provided "to review earlier efforts in

³⁴The marked differences between the sub-units was reflected in the Church and Society core group's response to the report of the Review Committee. The answer to the Review Committee's question concerning what actions would result from its program revealed no direct involvement with the poor and oppressed. When the Core Group was asked about collaboration with other sub-units it gave a humble and diplomatic, if not altogether accurate, response that it was "not very competent in W.C.C. organizational procedure." From the beginning inter-unit tensions and rivalries limited the potential of JPSS development. See Draft Report of the Church and Society Core Group Meeting, Glion May 15-20, 1976, Appendix B p. 74. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

³⁵Executive Committee, Minutes, (1977), p. 12.

the ecumenical movement in interpreting concerns for justice."³⁶ The committee approved a minute which, among other items: stressed that within the study the various dimensions of JPSS should be "given their due weight and be interrelated and integrated as complementary perspectives on a single reality"; requested the General Secretariat to draft a prospectus; requested the Central Committee to form a task force to complete the draft prospectus; and, reaffirmed the decision that Church and Society focus on the role of faith, science and technology in relation to JPSS and that they convene a world conference on the theme.³⁷

³⁶Executive Committee, Minutes, (1977), p. 12.

³⁷Executive Committee Minutes (1977), pp. 12-13. This reaffirmation of the role of Church and Society in relation to the JPSS theme assured that sustainability would continue to be an element in the equation. In light of the belief noted at that meeting, that one world conference could not adequately address the JPSS concept the theme for the MIT conference ultimately dropped any reference to JPSS and became instead "Faith, Science and the Future."

TABLE 6

Major Dimensions of Two Approaches to the
JPSS Emphasis

	CCPD/CCIA	CHURCH AND SOCIETY
Primary Concern	Rights of poor	Controlling technology and its impact
Point of departure	Concrete situations	Visions of the future
Methodology	Action / reflection	Conference analysis of issues
Involve-ment	All persons	Elites
JPSS Emphasis	Justice Participation	Sustainability Participation

A Unit II Initiative

In April the Program Unit on Justice and Service drafted a proposal for the organization of JPSS which, in effect, suggested that the then current emphasis of CCPD, CCIA and Church and Society be the three foci for the JPSS program.³⁸ It was hoped that such an

³⁸Program Unit on Justice and Service, Commission Meetings, Egham, Surry, April 17-21, 1977. Outline of a program, "Towards A Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" p. 3 W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

approach would move beyond simply providing an umbrella title or increased communication between sub-units. Rather, it was felt that if the theme were seriously developed it could add new dynamic and direction to the various unit programs.³⁹ Three general objectives were outlined which stressed the need to: "clarify and interrelate the central issues so that people can understand them and share in the debate"; identify and support positive efforts already underway in the churches; and, relate local and universal issues more effectively.⁴⁰ One of the most significant dimensions of the Unit II proposal was the implicit recognition of the legitimacy of the presence of the concept of sustainability in the theme.

Church and Society: The Theme Explored

In addition to co-ordinating the World Council contribution to the International Conference on Nuclear Power and its Fuel Cycle held in 1977⁴¹, the sub-unit on Church and Society, convened consultations which continued the pursuit of issues which had evolved during

³⁹Egham (1977), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰Egham (1977), p. 4.

⁴¹"The Churches and the Nuclear Debate," Anticipation No. 24 (November 1977)

the sixties and seventies and which had been ratified by the Nairobi Assembly. Near the end of June the consultation on "The Ideological and Theological Debate about Science" was held at Cambridge.⁴² At the heart of these discussions was an attempt to find common agreement on the nature of scientific knowledge and method on the one hand, and theological knowledge and faith on the other, in order to build the foundation for dialogue on the responsibilities of science and theology and the contribution which each can make to understanding the universe and contributing to creative and meaningful human life.⁴³

The consultation on "Humanity, Nature and God" met in Zurich from July 11-16, 1977. The introduction to the report of the consultation invoked familiar themes related to the threats to survival posed by science and technology and the difficulty controlling them, and implied that the consultation would explore attitudes towards nature, humanity and God which would be conducive to justice and sustainability.⁴⁴ A variety of topics

⁴²This represented a continuation of the discussions begun at the Church and Society-Faith and Order sponsored consultation on Faith and Science held at Mexico City in 1975. See Anticipation No. 22 (May 1976)

⁴³Cambridge (1977), pp. 5-8.

⁴⁴Zurich (1977), p. 22.

was discussed (see Appendix E), but of particular relevance to the present study was the strong affirmation of the intrinsic value of all creation and the assertion that man's dominion in creation must reflect participation in God's creative action.⁴⁵

Later in July the Working Committee of Church and Society met to summarize the work of the consultations and produced their report on "Theology, Science and Human Purpose." "A new theological vision of nature, humanity and God" which would guide the realization of a just, participatory and sustainable society was summarized:⁴⁶

It shows humanity, society and nature as creatures of a creator God, who is not identified with nature, although nature can declare his glory and show his presence. On the other hand, humanity in its freedom and creativity is given a dominion and stewardship in relation to the rest of creation. Humanity, however, abuses its dominion over other creatures and threatens the structure of creation. Humanity, society and nature need salvation through Christ. He liberates humanity from the abuse of power for the exercise of stewardship. People manifest their solidarity with other creatures and look at them as partners on the path to redemption.

⁴⁵Zurich (1977), pp. 23-24, 32-33. The report reflected a dominating influence of process thought at the consultation and a regular interaction with Biblical thought and material.

⁴⁶Morsarch (1977), p. 71.

Having developed a preliminary theological basis, the report addressed the JPSS directly by providing some "biblical insights" on the three basic terms with the intention of surmounting the ambiguity which surrounded their common usage.⁴⁷ Justice was identified with the assurance of God's care for humanity, particularly in relation to the "protection of the weak" and the "limitation of the strong."⁴⁸ Participation was defined in terms of "covenant" and "communion," or responsibility and relationship: "A participatory society may be interpreted as a society in which the community is neither imposed or forgotten, in which decisions are shared . . ."⁴⁹ Sustainability was interpreted in terms of God's faithfulness and the power of God to overcome human destructiveness: "The sustainable society is a society in which the consciousness of the promise remains greater than the consciousness of the threats."⁵⁰ Thus, the sub-unit on Church and Society had offered responses to some of the long existent and recently emerged questions raised in World

⁴⁷Morsarch (1977), p. 72.

⁴⁸Morsarch (1977), p. 72.

⁴⁹Morsarch (1977), p. 72.

⁵⁰Morsarch (1977), p. 72.

Council discussions: the former concerned with the nature of creation and humanity's relationship to it; the latter dealing with the meaning and relationship of the terms in the JPSS emphasis.⁵¹

Bone of Contention

At the meeting of the Central Committee in August, 1977 it was made abundantly clear that the JPSS concept remained a bone of contention rather than a unifying program emphasis within the World Council. A proposal, based largely on the Unit II proposal developed in April was presented to the Central Committee along with a memorandum from the executive committee which, among other things, strongly urged that: the title be changed to avoid "the well known linguistic and conceptual problems"; and, the basic theological positions underlying the program be clarified.⁵² A drafting group was appointed to consider the proposal

⁵¹It must be remembered that these were the product of Church and Society discussions and that as such they did not represent official W.C.C. positions.

⁵²Central Committee, (1977) Documents No. 24 and 25, W.C.C. Archives, Geneva. The Committee was either unaware of the product of the recent Church and Society consultations or chose not to acknowledge it.

and report later in the week to the full committee.⁵³

Almost a year and half after the acceptance of the theme the drafting committee still found it necessary to begin its report with an explanation of "why a JPSS program emphasis?".⁵⁴ The Drafting Group's critique of the text which it was asked to analyse revealed some of the areas of tension when it questioned "an apparent assumption that justice, participation and sustainability are equal and mutually compatible. There is some tension between them at least on the surface."⁵⁵ The group also rejected as too simplistic the clustering of issues which identified justice with socio-economic concerns, participation with political-institutional issues, and sustainability with scientific and technological questions.⁵⁶ The Central Committee adopted the groups recommendations that the name remain the same and that a JPSS

⁵³Central Committee, (1977) Document No. 44. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva. See Appendix E for the text of this document.

⁵⁴Central Committee (1977), Document No. 44, p. 1.

⁵⁵Central Committee (1977) Document No. 44, Appendix p. 1.

⁵⁶Central Committee (1977) Document No. 44, Appendix p. 1. See Appendix E in this study for excerpts from the drafting group report.

Advisory Group be formed to define and co-ordinate the emphasis.⁵⁷

Justice Triumphs

The first meeting of the Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from various sub-units, staff and consultants, was held in December 1977.⁵⁸ The report of that meeting, presented to the February, 1978 meeting of the Executive Committee revealed some dramatic developments in the "official" interpretation of JPSS within the World Council. "Justice", it declared, "is the governing and central term in the title 'Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society'."⁵⁹

⁵⁷Central Committee, Minutes, 30th (1977) p. 56. It is not clear whether the recommendation of the Review Committee in 1976 that Church and Society co-ordinate the JPSS emphasis was not accepted at that time, or if it proved unviable.

⁵⁸"Towards A Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society: Summary of Presentations and Notes on Discussions at the First Meeting of the Advisory Committee," December 11-14, 1977. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva. See Appendix F for list of participants.

⁵⁹Executive Committee, Minutes, (1978) p. 10. While this position reflected the general tone of the Advisory Committee it was obviously not unanimously held. Randers, in his presentation on sustainability had said: "In my view it is clear that the goal of sustainability is second neither to justice nor participation . . ." See "Summary . . ." in footnote 58 above, Appendix 5 "The Goal of Sustainability" p. 2.

Participation and Sustainability were to be interpreted as dimensions of Justice,⁶⁰ which was defined as "a messianic category, pointing towards the new reality and at the same time it is the central focus of the present historical struggles as the historical embodiment of love."⁶¹

The Advisory Committee had also made a choice concerning the basic point of departure for the emphasis:⁶²

The starting points for this effort should be the present historical reality of injustice and the struggle and the search by people everywhere for more justice and participation in society. Rather than developing a vision of an ideal society, the Advisory Committee saw its task and the purpose of this cooperative effort in helping Christians and Churches involved in the struggle for justice in society to come to a clearer common understanding of the historical reality on the basis of the Christian faith.

⁶⁰Advisory Committee on the Search for a JPSS, "Report of the First Meeting," Geneva, December 1-4, 1977, p. 4. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva. For a similar interpretation see Andre Dumas, "A Society which Creates Justice: Three Themes but one Development," Ecumenical Review, XXX (July 1978), pp. 209-219.

⁶¹Advisory Committee Report (December 1977), p. 4.

⁶²Executive Committee Minutes, (1978) p. 10. In his address to the meeting Philip Potter had raised up the need "to articulate something of the content of the vision of a just society where there is full participation for all and which is sustainable." There was obviously no consensus within the Executive Committee concerning this question. A few paragraphs further on the minutes reported the approval of a recommendation requesting the commissions and working groups to "spellout in particular their contribution to the Christian vision of a 'just society'," p. 11.

In this phase of the inter-unit World Council debate the perspectives advocated by the Unit on Justice and Service had clearly dominated the discussions. Sustainability had not been discarded, but it was definitely relegated to a secondary position in relation to the other two concepts. This was further reflected in the areas and issues recommended to receive further study:⁶³

The people as the subject of the struggle; the struggle about power; people's participation' the relation between national and international justice; the functions of science and technology; differing modes of action in the struggle.

The role of JPSS within the World Council structure was reaffirmed to be that of "a common program emphasis and a coordinating thrust of the W.C.C. as a whole: it was not another program alongside those already existing."⁶⁴

Economics Interpreted: A Church and Society Perspective

1978 was a busy year for the sub-unit on Church and Society as it sought to stimulate further discussion

⁶³Executive Committee, Minutes, (1978) p. 10. These issues relate to sustainability in a variety of ways, but the thrust of the report indicated that the concern and direction of the exploration lay in other areas.

⁶⁴Executive Committee Minutes (1978) p. 11. The minutes also pointed out that the world conference being coordinated by Church and Society was neither more nor less than one part of the overall emphasis.

and collect and disseminate information in preparation for the 1979 world conference. In June of 1978 a consultation on political economy, ethics and theology was held in Zurich.⁶⁵ The report of that consultation, "A New Economics for the JPSS?", reflected another attempt by Church and Society to define and integrate the three terms in the JPSS concept, this time primarily in relation to economics.⁶⁶ The general context was described in concepts which had come to characterize Church and Society discussions.⁶⁷ The three central

⁶⁵Two other consultations were also sponsored that year by Church and Society. One in May at Celiqny, Switzerland which continued the ecumenical debate on issues related to nuclear energy, and the second in August, held at Erfurt, GDR, which focused on "Science, Ecology and Theology in East European Perspective." See Anticipation No. 26 (June 1979) for reports of these meetings.

⁶⁶Zurich (1978), pp. 25-31. As noted above a previous effort by Church and Society had focused on theological perspective.

⁶⁷Zurich (1978), pp. 25-26. Four factors were presented as having arisen in the 1970s which were said to have a pervasive influence on the existing situation. With the exception of the first one cited, which referred to resource use and environmental disruption, the other three factors, such as the influence of political and institutional factors on rates and patterns of economic development had been discussed in ecumenical gatherings for over fifty years. (see Chapters 1 and 2).

JPSS terms were discussed at some length: Justice as an expression of love in personal and institutional forms focused on the rights of the poor and oppressed; Participation as involvement in making decisions about production and distribution which transcended voting and consumer choice; and, sustainability as a concern with resource use, the relation of humankind to nature, and the control of technology.⁶⁸ Section IV of the report, in particular, reflected an awareness of the Executive Committees affirmation of justice as the central focus of the JPSS emphasis in its title, "Towards Justice Through Physical Sustainability and Limited In Equality."⁶⁹ A blending of concepts was revealed at various places within the report where, for example, an "enduring" society was suggested as one element of justice,⁷⁰ while at another point it was observed that "justice over time requires sustainability."⁷¹ At one point it appeared as if the inter-council debate on

⁶⁸Zurich (1978), pp. 26-27. Each of the definitions and discussions drew upon categories articulated in previous discussions.

⁶⁹Zurich (1978), p. 28.

⁷⁰Zurich (1978), p. 27.

⁷¹Zurich (1978), p. 28.

the point of departure for the enquiry was addressed indirectly within the report. "It is not enough," the report declared, "to define such terms [JPSS], stress their importance and point out situations in which they were or were not implemented."⁷² A call was then issued for an integrative approach which would seriously explore the compatible and contradictory elements of the terms and their implications for future development policy.⁷³

In general, the 1978 Zurich consultation provided a summary of much of the discussion to that point about the various dimensions of the JPSS emphasis and their implications for political and economic organization. The report presented: (1) a description of the existing situation and primary causative factors; (2) definitions of justice, participation and sustainability; (3) brief attention to the relationship between those terms with an emphasis on their harmony; (4) a critique of existing political economic structures from the perspectives of

⁷²Zurich (1978), p. 30. As indicated above CCPD among others stressed the need to identify situations where injustice is occurring and focus on them. The similarity in wording at this point appears far too strong to assume that it resulted from pure chance.

⁷³Zurich (1978), pp. 30-31.

JPSS; (5) suggestions for modifications in thought patterns and perspectives which could lead to modifications in political economic structures.⁷⁴

Regional Perspectives: Diversities Clarified

The second meeting of the JPSS Advisory Committee was held September 12-15, 1978 at Geneva. A major portion of the meeting was devoted to the presentation and consideration of regional perspectives on JPSS.⁷⁵ The diversity of perspective and opinion provided further insight into some of the tensions surrounding JPSS within World Council discussions as the following brief summaries of concerns expressed by representatives from the various regions of the globe demonstrate:⁷⁶

Asia: Justice in terms of the realization of basic economic and social needs was listed as being of primary importance, with participation as an integral dimension of that justice; " . . . sustainability often

⁷⁴In relationship to this latter point it must be emphasized that the report focused on needed changes in view point and giving attention to dimensions not then under consideration which must become part of present and future thought in shaping decisions about political economic structures. Little consideration was given to actual systematic change.

⁷⁵Geneva, (September 1978), "Dossier".

⁷⁶Geneva, (September 1978), "Dossier". All of the following are drawn from materials included in the dossier.

appears to be of secondary importance and the quest for sustenance is more important." The impact of transnational corporations on resource depletion was noted. A call for greater conceptual clarity of the basic issues was raised along with the need to explore the nature and implications of JPSS with people of other faiths and ideologies.

Europe: Regional unity, economic and social change, and self-reliance⁷⁷ were the major foci. Any direct references to justice, participation or sustainability were avoided. The latter category was described in terms of a concern for "what agricultural and other raw material resources can Europe count on to sustain its inhabitants"; especially in light of the "vanishing empires."

Pacific Region: Attention was drawn to the strong Western bias reflected in the conceptualization of JPSS and in the form the discussions had thus far taken - "highly conceptualized debates and documents, etc.," Inter-Regional differences in relation to social, cultural, political and economic patterns were stressed,

⁷⁷The Europeans adopted (or co-opted) this term used frequently by Third World representatives to describe the direction in which those nations must move.

but central to the discussion was an appreciation for the impact which world views and cultural meanings different from those of the "west" would have on interpreting JPSS in the Pacific Area.

Latin American: Major areas of concern included a truly participatory society; the implications of reemphasized national security doctrine in the form of repression, violence and growing poverty; the churches in the struggle for human rights; the impact of transnational corporations; and, theological developments including theologies of liberation. Some clear insight into Third World perspectives on sustainability was provided in three questions;

- (a) Will the Latin American people continue to be submitted to exploitation? That is, is life for the majority of Latin Americans bearable?
- (b) The problem of the exploitation of natural resources: by decision of whom? for whom? by whom?
- (c) The question of priorities and needs in the exploitation of natural resources.

Africa: Emphasis was placed on justice and the exploitation of African problems by affluent persons, corporations and nations. One dimension of long-range perspective was reflected in the suggestion that "the JPSS study be transformed into a program to help churches

and communities in Africa to begin now facing the challenges of tomorrow."⁷⁸

North America: Two assertions concerning "American"⁷⁹ militarism and the role of "America" as a world power were made: "There appears to be a growing awareness, even among American military experts, that "defense" in the old sense is no longer possible"; and "The consensus that American power in the world is limited is growing."⁸⁰ The confession was made that "'Americans' find it difficult to identify with the concept of participation as that has developed in the third world." Strongly optimistic statements relating to sustainability were made including claims that the "small is beautiful" orientation to life was replacing

⁷⁸In notes submitted with the report Bishop Okulu indicated that participation is the primary need and concern in Africa today, superseding justice and sustainability. Injustice was seen as the result of the denial of participation, while sustainability was seen as a legitimate concern for sometime in the future.

⁷⁹The word "American" is placed in quotation marks by the present author since it appears in this instance to be a euphemism for the United States of America. American is used in the report.

⁸⁰Both of these statements were intended as indicating positive shifts in U.S. attitude. U.S. government policies being pursued during the writing of the present study indicate the need to reevaluate those optimistic statements.

the valuing of growth and bigness. The report included no focus on justice.

Middle East: Major attention was given to the importance of facilitating the dialogue in this area with persons of other faiths and ideologies.

The third world concerns were expressed primarily in terms of the need to realize greater justice and participation, to achieve basic sustenance for all people and to expand creative dialogue with persons of other faiths and ideologies. Several calls were issued to clarify the basic nature and meaning of the emphasis, and the Pacific Region report in particular, questioned the western bias which dominated the methodology.⁸¹

The European-North American emphasis was primarily upon sustainability. The North American report in particular gave no serious attention to any issues relating to justice.⁸² Two additional observations were included in

⁸¹This latter concern was not reflected in the final report of the meeting yet it both questioned the basic nature of the JPSS emphasis and much of the characteristic approach of the World Council to social issues, and presented an invitation and challenge to explore new approaches and learn from different social-cultural patterns of interaction and understanding.

⁸²This must be attributed to the preoccupation with sustainability since it could not be successfully maintained that there were not unjust conditions to be addressed in North America, and unjust systems affecting every region of the globe in which North Americans were participating.

the introduction to the dossier containing these regional reports: a call for increased attention to the interaction between global, national and local issues; and, the observation that more attention needed to be given to the place of the church in the struggle for a JPSS.⁸³

In-House Responses

The Second Advisory Committee meeting also gave some attention to responses from various World Council commissions and working groups to its first report. As the regional perspective did for various parts of the globe, these responses provided further insight into the diversity of opinion within the World Council about the JPSS concept and its exploration.

The response from the Faith and Order Commission indicated that while the conclusion that justice is the central term in JPSS may be correct, it questioned whether that conclusion followed from the theological reflection presented in the report.⁸⁴ Faith and Order affirmed the legitimacy of the concerns represented by the three main terms and reminded the committee that

⁸³Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁸⁴Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

there existed both a lack of unanimity on the weight to be given each term and an ongoing controversy on assessing their inter-relation.⁸⁵ The JPSS title was seen to be a call to debate rather than an agreed statement.⁸⁶ The rather facile identification of justice with the Messianic Kingdom was questioned both in terms of its validity and its failure to represent a variety of other perspectives held by member churches.⁸⁷ Two particular weaknesses in the report were identified:⁸⁸

(a) the New Testament describes the Kingdom as both justice and Koinonia. It is impossible to say which of the two is primary; (b) the report gives the impression that historical developments press towards a new age . . . Instead of gradually coming closer to the Kingdom, humankind may go through periods of destruction.

Faith and Order cautioned against the tendency to "glorify too unilaterally the 'local'" while the "real task is rather to clarify the interaction between the local and the universal."⁸⁹ The commission concluded that "though

⁸⁵ Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁸⁶ Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁸⁷ Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁸⁸ Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁸⁹ Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

the report claims to start from actual reality in society, the present text is too abstract."⁹⁰

The Working Group on Dialogue With Living Faiths and Ideologies challenged the hierarchical organization of terms which resulted from asserting justice as the primary category.⁹¹ Participation, it was argued, should be expanded to include not only political and ideological issues, but should include "dimensions of cultural pluralism particularly in relation to popular religion."⁹²

The response from CICARWS affirmed the relating of justice to the Kingdom of God, thereby freeing it from identification with the understanding of justice held by any particular society.⁹³ In discussing the concept of sustainability the commission reported that "those present from developing nations made clear that this concern is also urgent in developing countries."⁹⁴ The importance

⁹⁰Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁹¹Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁹²Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁹³Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁹⁴Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier." Unfortunately the report did not indicate what understanding of sustainability guided its discussion. This affirmation by CICARWS participants differed markedly from the views expressed in the regional reports from Asia, Africa and Latin America examined above.

of authentic participation in aid programs at both the donor and recipient levels was emphasized.⁹⁵

In terms of affirmation of the report the Program to Combat Racism observed that: It had helped to pose more clearly the issues related to the struggle for justice; it reflected 'a collective vision of the churches; and, it was helpful to create some positive goals to be "for" rather than always issuing critiques.⁹⁶ On the other hand, some in PCR felt the report was too abstract, that it reflected too much a "whiteman's point of view," that it was too vague, and that it did little to help identify and focus on the "signs of the times."⁹⁷

The CCPD response to the Advisory Committee report was glowingly affirmative. The report had: taken the right point of departure in a "contextual" approach; emphasized the need for repentance; presented a balanced perspective between regional and global interaction; and, furthered "the search for 'non-negotiable positions' that would provide the new axiomatic basis for a Christian understanding

⁹⁵Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁹⁶Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

⁹⁷Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

of the 'penultimate'"⁹⁸ Exulting in the "realistic" approach reflected and facilitated by the report the Commission saw the basic need remaining in relation to JPSS to be the problem of finding ways to clearly communicate the essence of the report to the churches: "The more difficult task of conceptualization has to a large extent been overcome."⁹⁹

The CCIA submitted a brief reply basically affirming the report and expressing appreciation for attention to issues of concern to that commission.¹⁰⁰ The sub-unit on Church and Society apparently submitted no reply.¹⁰¹

As the above summaries have indicated there was far from unanimous agreement on the direction which the JPSS discussions had taken. Although somewhat stereotyped, the points of contention could be summarized as follows:

⁹⁸Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier." This enthusiastic response was not surprising in light of the fact, noted above, that CCPD positions dominated the first Advisory Committee meeting.

⁹⁹Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

¹⁰⁰Geneva (September, 1978), "Dossier."

¹⁰¹The dossier contained no document from Church and Society. This seems unusual in light of focus of that sub-unit on JPSS. It is possible that the report of the consultation held in June was intended to be interpreted as the Church and Society response.

- (1) Definition of terms adequate or inadequate;
- (2) Primacy of justice or equality of terms;
- (3) Terms compatible or incompatible: In what sense? If not a hierarchy, then what is the interrelationship of the terms?
- (4) Discussion abstract and vague or clear and definitive?
- (5) JPSS viewed as "collective vision" or critiqued as not adequately representative.
- (6) Sustainability an issue for Third World or not a significant issue;
- (7) Messianic interpretation of justice valid as it is or questionable;
- (8) Focus on local issues, global issues or inter-relationship of these. While some were quite satisfied with the direction the interpretation of JPSS had taken it was clear that many were not.

Jamaica '79: Controversy Not Consensus

Confrontation on the stance taken by the Advisory Committee came at the Central Committee meeting held at Kingston, Jamaica, January 1-11, 1979.¹⁰² The Advisory

¹⁰²During interviews with World Council officers in Geneva during January 1981, several volunteered observations that the discussions at Kingston related to JPSS were memorable for their animated and critical nature.

Committee submitted its report, outlined in Table 7, which retained a number of positions set forth in its first report including: the assertion of justice as the primary goal; the messianic interpretation of justice; and, an emphasis on the "contextual" approach.¹⁰³ The concept of sustainability was expanded with the additional interpretation of representing God's faithfulness and his blessing of creation.¹⁰⁴ To say that the report received "mixed reviews" is an understatement. The minutes can speak for themselves:¹⁰⁵

Taken together, the reactions to and comments on the JPSS report were varied, diverse and in some cases even contradictory. Where criticism, reservations, or hesitations were expressed the following reasons were given: the distinction between the human and the divine, history and eschatology was not made clearly enough; there was a tendency at times towards an unexamined messianism; the elements of "sin," "humility," "repentance," sacrificial servant, etc. were not given sufficient consideration; the use of biblical material should be more carefully treated; a great deal more work needed to be done in order to move from theological categories to political categories. Where approval, excitement and enthusiasm were expressed,

¹⁰³"Report of the Advisory Committee on the Search for a Just, Participatory and Sustainability Society," Central No. 8, p. 19. W.C.C. Archives Geneva.

¹⁰⁴Central Committee (1979), Document No. 8, pp. 7-8. This interpretation had first appeared at the Church and Society Consultation on "Humanity, Nature and God" in 1977 (see above).

¹⁰⁵Central Committee Minutes, 31st (1979), pp. 17-18.

the following reasons were given: the basic orientation of the JPSS report perceived history and eschatology from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed for whom the struggle for justice, participation and sustainability (in many situations even mere existence) was a matter of life and death; the basic concerns embodied in the report were consonant with the guidelines of Unit II's work. It was generally agreed that the report had considerably advanced the W.C.C reflection on the JPSS emphasis; yet, more clarity and fuller articulation were needed, especially regarding the sustainability aspect. In spite of some reservations regarding the report, all Unit Committees were agreed that the issues of political ethics were of special importance and should be included in the agenda of the Sixth Assembly. There seemed to be general agreement that the concrete experiences of people's struggles in their local, national and regional situations were of primary importance. Yet, at the same time, their struggles were rendered more effective and more meaningful when they were related to, informed and supported by the global perspective which bodies such as the W.C.C were in the best position to provide.

The Advisory Committee had chosen to ignore many of the criticisms included in the responses to its first report at its own peril.¹⁰⁶ The basic results which issued from Kingston meeting in many respects left the JPSS emphasis

¹⁰⁶ Evidently the perspective of Unit II was not as dominant in the Central Committee as it was in the Advisory group. Given the deep differences which existed within the W.C.C. on the basic issues such as the general perception of the JPSS emphasis, definition and interpretation of the main terms, the nature and degree of inter-relationship between those terms, point of departure for the emphasis and methodologies to be used in its pursuit it would have been difficult, if not impossible to produce an interpretive document presenting a single and at the same time acceptable perspective.

Table 7

Outline of
Report of the Advisory Committee on
The Search for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society

W.C.C. Central Committee
Kingston, January 1-11, 1979

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- I. Mandate and Work of the JPSS Advisory Committee
 - II. Developing Debate
 - A. Origins
 - B. Starting from the present historical reality
 - C. Voices of the people
 - D. A challenge to the churches
 - III. The Aim: Justice in Society
 - A. The promise of the messianic kingdom
 - B. Justice, a messianic category
 - C. Participation
 - D. Sustainability
 - IV. Issues in the Struggle
 - A. People, the subject of the struggle
 - B. Common struggle with people of living faiths and ideologies
 - C. The reality of power
 - D. Structures of participation
 - E. Modes of action
 - F. Interaction between global and national issues
 - G. Science and technology
 - V. Some Affirmations about the Life of the Church
 - A. Solidarity and identity
 - B. A common humanity
 - C. The witness of redemption
 - D. The form of a servant
 - E. A "living sacrifice"
 - F. The structured life of the church
 - IV. Towards an Ecumenical Agenda
 - A. The role of the World Council of Churches
 - B. JPSS in relation to other W.C.C. Program Emphasis
 - C. Program priorities
 - 1. Program of study and reflection
 - 2. Programs of support and promotion
 - 3. Programs of education

where it had been.¹⁰⁷ The report was received as another contribution to the JPSS emphasis; consent was once again given for the publication of a "popular" document; and, Units were urged to continue and coordinate their efforts in relation to the emphasis.¹⁰⁸

MIT '79: THE DEBATE CONTINUED

The primary event for the sub-unit on Church and Society following the Fifth Assembly was the World Conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" held July 12-24, 1979 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, U.S.A. The planning committee for the MIT conference, as it was known popularly, had set down three major objectives: (a) to expand the ecumenical

¹⁰⁷The discussions had no doubt been fruitful in stimulating dialogue and reflection, but the position of the emphasis within the World Council remained unchanged. Many conceptual and procedural ambiguities remained and there was no clear image of how to get the dialogue into the churches in a meaningful way. In a letter to the Advisory Committee members written after the Kingston meeting, Konrad Raiser observed while "the discussion clearly revealed strong hesitation among members of the Central Committee on the theological and conceptual level . . . there was a fairly broad agreement . . . that the concerns expressed in the report were of vital importance for the life of the churches and for the future activities of the World Council of Churches." Raiser also noted that it was felt that the Advisory Committee had fulfilled its mandate and he thanked the members for their participation. Letter from Konrad Raiser, Associate General Secretary, to members of the JPSS Advisory Committee, February 6, 1979. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

¹⁰⁸Central Committee Minutes, 31st, (1979), p. 18.

debate on faith, science and society to include a truly world-wide perspective; (b) to explore more fully the relationship of the comparatively new concept of sustainability to the more familiar ecumenical concerns for justice and participation; and, (c) "to develop a critique for science and technology in terms of faith."¹⁰⁹

Three "ethical criteria" were proposed to guide the operation of science and technology.¹¹⁰ The first affirmed the need to respect every person's God given freedom to develop human potential.¹¹¹ The second upheld the right of all creation to be treated responsibly.¹¹² The third imposed a principle of placing the "burden of proof" upon those who would violate the first two criteria, requiring that they demonstrate how "their projects

¹⁰⁹MIT, Cambridge, U.S.A. (1979), II, 1-2.

¹¹⁰The MIT participants appeared to have sided with those who over the years in ecumenical debate had favored the establishment of some several ethical guidelines. It must be remembered that this position has not been unanimously embraced in World Council discussions (see Chapters 2 and 3 above).

¹¹¹MIT, Cambridge U.S.A. (1979), II, 24.

¹¹²MIT, Cambridge U.S.A. (1979), II, 24.

can promote a sustainable future for humans and their ecosystems.¹¹³

A variety of familiar interpretations of justice appeared in the MIT reports. Some saw justice, in terms of the rights of the poor and oppressed, as the central issue.¹¹⁴ Another section invoked the principle of harmony asserting that "in a just society persons and groups . . . relate to one another for the benefit of all."¹¹⁵ A third section report reasserted the extension of justice to non-human creation and future generations, and in an interesting extension of the concept of oppression claimed that "justice always means concern for the oppressed, the exploited and the weak, whether these be human beings or the earth."¹¹⁶

¹¹³MIT, Cambridge U.S.A. (1979), II, 24. Sustainability was interestingly, the JPSS concept attached to ethical criteria at this point. Previous discussions would favor the conclusion that this would be strongly challenged by Third World perspectives favoring justice as the guiding ethical category.

¹¹⁴MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 127.

¹¹⁵MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 148.

¹¹⁶MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 32-35. Emphasis added.

Sustainability was woven into several of the section reports. The description of a sustainable society articulated at Bucharest was not literally invoked at MIT but the basic thrust was summarized in the description of a society "in which people live with each other and the physical environment in ways that lead to continuing life rather than destruction."¹¹⁷ In the discussion of population growth and limits it was indicated that social sustainability as well as ecological sustainability must be considered: "We are interested in social sustainability --a moral criterion which includes the quality, dignity and purpose of every individual and every society."¹¹⁸ A firm position was taken on the issue of resource availability with the assertion that "it is the duty of every person and every society to recognize the fact that resources are limited."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 149. At this point justice was also interpreted as extending to "human relationship with the whole ecosystem as well as the relationship with other human persons and groups."

¹¹⁸MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 83-84. A parallel dimension had emerged in some of the W.C.C. staff discussions in which a concern for "spiritual" sustainability had been expressed. (see W.C.C. Week of Meetings, 1976).

¹¹⁹MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 160. Evidently those who in previous World Council debates had maintained confidence in technological innovation to expand the resource base were over-ruled or were absent.

A participatory society was interpreted as one which "includes in the process of decision making all those whom any decision affects."¹²⁰ Within the reports the need for participation was applied to economic, social, political and technological issues. At one point it was indicated to be the condition for the realization of justice and sustainability,¹²¹ while at another point it was asserted that "participation without justice is incomplete and insecure."¹²²

The relationship between the three major JPSS terms was referred to in a variety of ways at MIT. Renewed efforts to expand the understanding of justice to include certain dimensions of sustainability, i.e. the "rights" of non-human creation have been discussed above. The relationship between justice and resource use was unequivocally stated:¹²³

It is a clear implication of the Christian understanding of the activity of God in creation, that all men and women are to benefit from it and that every person has the same right to use these resources reasonably."

¹²⁰ MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 148.

¹²¹ MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 35.

¹²² MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 155.

¹²³ MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 160.

Section II concluded that "only a just society can be a sustainable society" due to the violence that erupts as a result of injustice.¹²⁴

One of the most concise and comprehensive discussions of the relationship of the terms was presented by the Section VIII report. After affirming justice as the primary concept the report concluded:¹²⁵

In clarifying the meaning of a just society we have found that, if justice is the goal, then sustainability should best be seen as a necessary, though not sufficient condition for the existence of justice, while we found participation to be a necessary condition without which neither sustainability nor justice will be achieved.

This represented one of the first attempts to define a necessary and positive relationship between the three terms. Although justice was given primacy, participation and sustainability retained their own integrity while being held in relation to each other. Section X interpreted sustainability as a long-term goal with present-day implications for an equitable distribution of resources, as well as a concern for future generations.¹²⁶ The fact that certain tensions also exist in the relation of justice

¹²⁴MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 35.

¹²⁵MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 27-28. No clear definition of the terms accompanied this construction.

¹²⁶MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 159.

to sustainability was realized and an example was cited of the dilemma presented by the use of DDT: to control malaria now, but face a threat to persons and wild life in the future from chemical residue.¹²⁷ At the Central Committee meeting immediately following the conference it was noted that the conference had produced an awareness that preparatory thought had focused on an understanding of sustainability primarily in relation to ecology, but the need had now become clear to explore more fully the relationships between sustainability and justice and participation.¹²⁸

In his report to the Central Committee on the MIT conference Metropolitan Paulos Gregorios evaluated the discussions related to science, technology and sustainability in this way:¹²⁹

The conference was convinced of the need for new Christian thinking about political economy, especially from the standpoint of ecological and technological sustainability, but it didn't get very far in its own debates. We faced the familiar impasse between

¹²⁷MIT, Cambridge U.S.A., (1979), II, 159.

¹²⁸Executive Committee, Minutes, Bossey, September 10-14, 1979, p. 11.

¹²⁹Metropolitan Paulos Gregorios, "Report on the Conference on Faith, Science and the Future," to Central Committee, Geneva, August 14-22, 1980, p. 3. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva, emphasis added.

economists from the poor countries who fear that the concern about sustainability will be used to keep their economies poor and the economists from the rich countries concerned about the growing pressure on world resources arising from the continuing emphasis on economic productivity.

The conference on Faith, Science and the Future had provided an opportunity for expanded dialogue and discussion about JPSS, and for the restating of a variety of previously articulated perspectives.

In addition, Metropolitan Gregorios summarized three theological categories which had emerged in the course of Church and Society discussions and which would require further reflection. These were:¹³⁰

- a. The nature of reality and the relation between God humanity and the rest of creation.
- b. The nature of knowledge, the ways of knowing reality--in science and in faith/worship.
- c. The ways of changing reality and the nature of our Christian ethical responsibility.

Three positions were identified in relation to the discussions on the nature of reality:¹³¹

¹³⁰Gregorios, p. 4. These could be summarized as the ontological, the epistemological and the ethical.

¹³¹Gregorios, p. 3. These positions had emerged in the Futurum discussions and had been explored in W.C.C. consultations and publications. For a full introduction to the Eastern Orthodox position see Gregorios, The Human Presence, (Geneva: WCC, 1978), p. 104.

- a. The neo-reformed position, exemplified by theologians like Charles West and Gerhard Liedke "a theology of solidarity in conflict between humanity and the natural world" qualified by a theology of responsible human stewardship of nature;
- b. the process theology position exemplified by Charles Birch in which God, humanity and the world are together in the process of fulfillment in cosmic history; and,
- c. The Eastern Orthodox position in which humanity stands between God and His creation, participating in both, and transfiguring the world to become a manifestation of the glory of God.

Notably absent from this listing were any examples of more recently developed theological reflection from the younger churches of Asia, Africa or Latin America. Nevertheless, the ongoing Church and Society dialogues had begun to produce tentative but identifiable alternatives in response to the questions formally raised at New Delhi eighteen years earlier concerning the relationship of science to faith and new understandings of nature and humanity.

SUMMARY

The struggle for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society was a Council wide emphasis, not a

sub-unit or unit study program.¹³² This must be remembered in the controversy which surrounded JPSS is to be kept in perspective. A related factor, however, is the fact that the concept originated in Church and Society discussions and that throughout the period under consideration in this chapter the sub-unit maintained a special relationship to the JPSS as the result of Central Committee action which made the role of science and technology in the search for a JPSS the focus of Church and Society activity. This decision coupled with the Church and Society involvement in organizing the 1979 World Conference on Faith, Science and the Future¹³³ resulted in a double, and not often complementary, pursuit of the JPSS theme--one phase being the relatively "in house" and volatile Advisory and Central Committee discussions; the second phase, contemporaneous with the first, being the more public and

¹³²Under this "emphasis" heading various sub-units had described their activities in relation to the JPSS theme (i.e. 1977 CCPD proposals mentioned above) and others such as the 1980 CWME conference at Melbourne included JPSS concerns in their discussions. See Central Committee Minutes, 32ed (1980) pp. 13-15.

¹³³It should be remembered that JPSS was dropped from the official title of this conference at the insistence of some within the council staff that a single conference could not adequately address the JPSS theme. (see above)

apparently harmonious Church and Society consultations and reports.¹³⁴ Within the Council there appeared to be some confusion over just what a "program emphasis" was and how it was to operate,¹³⁵ and this undoubtedly contributed both to the tension in the discussions and the difficulty in moving effectively with the theme. For its part, the sub-unit on Church and Society pursued the JPSS theme much as it had explored study programs in the past with consultations, conferences and reports.¹³⁶ This rather independent pursuit of the theme by Church and Society was noted in one of the post-Kingston staff discussions.¹³⁷

¹³⁴The MIT reports reflect much greater diversity and certain areas of disagreement than did the reports of sub-unit consultations held earlier in the period.

¹³⁵As late as January, 1979 the Unit I committee felt it was necessary to ask "What is meant by a 'program emphasis' in contrast to a study program? How is a 'program emphasis' to function?" Central Committee, Kingston, January 1-11, 1979. Document No. 13 W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

¹³⁶The program on "Energy for My Neighbor" was intended to generate more direct involvement and response from local congregations. See Anticipation No. 23, (November 1976), 7-9.

¹³⁷"There has been a lack of coordination and communication in the house; especially between Church and Society and the Working Group." JPSS Discussion Group, Program Staff Meeting, March 12, 1979. W.C.C. Archives, Geneva.

Not all of the tensions related to the exploration of the JPSS concept could be traced to administrative and organizational difficulties. Differences existed at the most basic levels of approach to and interpretation of JPSS and its component parts. While a variety of opinions certainly existed across the World Council units and within each sub-unit in varying degrees it is still possible to draw two general images of JPSS based on the shape of the discussions within Church and Society and the Advisory Committee. Table 8 summarizes the two perspectives. The entries within each category do not indicate exclusive concern, but rather the concepts "emphasized" in the discussions of that unit or committee.

During the course of the JPSS discussions the concepts of justice developed in earlier World Council deliberations were not significantly altered or augmented. A strong reaffirmation of the extension of justice to non-human creation did appear in several of the MIT reports, however no consensus on the meaning of justice emerged during the period.

The concept of participation was broadened by the understanding that it pointed to the New Testament idea of Koinonia. This common sharing of commitment and community had implications not only for contemporary Christian fellowship, it also called into question the attempt to give the category of justice primacy over participation.

TABLE 8

Emphases Which Emerged in the Church
and Society and Advisory Committee
Discussions on JPSS 1976-1980

	CHURCH AND SOCIETY	ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Point of departure	Vision of the future	Concrete situations
Goal	Sustainable society	Just society
Time perspective	Long-range	Short-range
Methodology	Discussion and conceptualization	Praxis
Justice	Extended to include rights of nature	Rights of poor and oppressed
Participation	Involvement of all to control technology	Involvement of all in sharing power and decision making
Sustainability	Environmental preservation	Basic sustenance
JPSS emphasis	Sustainability / Participation	Justice / Participation
Ontological perspective	Cosmic	Anthroprocentric

Sustainability was given a new dimension with its definition as a reference to God's faithfulness to and defense of creation. The implication was that sustainability stood as a reminder that God's promise for creation stands over against and will overcome man's threat to creation.¹³⁸ Concerns were expressed during the period not only for environmental sustainability, but also for the "spiritual" sustainability of affluent cultures in particular, and the "social" sustainability of all cultures. The Bucharest formulation remained the most detailed exploration of a definition of the sustainable society, but throughout the period sustainability appeared as a partially defined and highly controversial concept.

Although much controversy over JPSS remained, certain accommodations were made during the period and there were indications, isolated though they may have been, of efforts to hold the terms within JPSS together and to formulate a unified concept. Most notable among these was the proposal in Section VIII of the MIT conference of a necessary relationship between justice, participation and sustainability. On the other hand, the MIT

¹³⁸This is in contrast to the theological question raised during the Futurum Study concerning the implications for Christian hope of the human potential to destroy human life and the environment. See chapter 5 above.

discussions in general and the 1979 Central Committee response to the proposed definition of JPSS demonstrated that a consensus on the nature, meaning, and for some the appropriateness, of the JPSS concept was far from realization.¹³⁹ A common appreciation did develop for the need to enter into dialogue and action with peoples of other faiths and ideologies who share concerns for justice, participation and sustainability.

As the World Council moved into the decade of the eighties, it was clear that, within the World Council and the global community, among the small minority in the human community who had considered the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society the ideal remained a source of debate and disagreement as well as challenge and hope.

¹³⁹Appendix G contains the summary notes of the program staff meeting on JPSS in March of 1979. The "conflicting" opinions indicate the radically different points of view which persisted: "The problem is not clarity"; "the problem is lack of clarity"; "the process has been inadequate," "the problem is not the process."

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study has been to trace the development of the concept of a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society within the World Council of Churches. Major attention has been focused on the sub-unit on Church and Society since the concept of a just and sustainable society evolved from its study programs. The concern for justice emerged early in the discussions under consideration. Over the years increasing attention was given to the nature and importance of participation. Sustainability appeared comparatively recently as a major concern in ecumenical discussion.

In this chapter significant problems which have emerged in relation to the JPSS concept will be described. Consideration will then be given to some of the accomplishments and contributions to ecumenical thought and activity which have resulted from the development of the JPSS concept thus far. Lastly the thesis of the present study will be explored in light of the inquiry and some suggestions for further development will be offered.

Problem Areas

A variety of problems emerged in the exploration of the JPSS theme which have made it difficult to achieve

a common understanding of its nature and appropriateness.

1. The concept of sustainability was surrounded by controversy from the moment it was first proposed. Justice and participation had long been voiced as concerns of the Church and the World Council, but the relatively new concept of sustainability came under fire from two quarters. Primary opposition has been voiced by representatives of the poor nations and peoples who see a two fold threat posed by emphasizing sustainability: It can become a diversion for the rich world allowing it to focus on the problems created by affluence while ignoring the plight of the poor; or it can be used as an excuse to deny to the poor technologies and resources necessary for their self-reliance. Opposition to sustainability and the limits-to-growth philosophy has also been voiced by many in the affluent nations who express confidence in the power of technological innovation to meet growing human wants and needs. Two radically different understandings of sustainability have been proposed which require clarification. One of these interprets the concept as an affirmation of God's faithfulness to and fulfillment of creation. The other places emphasis on the potential developed by the human community to damage and destroy creation.

2. A lack of conceptual clarity has not only plagued the constructed concept of JPSS, but has also

characterized World Council discussions over the years in which each of the terms, justice, participation and sustainability have been employed individually. At times within the JPSS discussions, and before them, ambiguity or confusion would result from a lack of consensus of definition: each side could define what it meant, but no agreement could be reached between the definitions. More frequently, however, no coherent development of concept was presented. As Part II of the present study has shown, over the years a broad range of understandings of justice, participation and sustainability have accumulated in World Council discussions.

3. Theological differences have clearly affected interpretations of terms and choice of emphasis within the JPSS discussions. The expanded exploration of the understanding of nature and the relationship of humanity to non-human creation have had a profound impact. Church and Society discussions at the present time appear to be dominated by advocates of process theology, while the traditionalist, anthropocentric position (Derr, et al.) has waned. Process theology was instrumental for example in expanding the concept of justice to include the rights of nature. Within the Council as a whole, however, a variety of theological opinions are represented including traditional positions supporting justice as an exclusively human concern. These differences are a natural part of

the ecumenical experience, but while there is richness in diversity it has also contributed to the complexity of interpreting the JPSS.

4. Attempts to define the relationship between justice, participation and sustainability within JPSS have taken various courses. Some have explicitly stated that justice or participation or these two combined are the only legitimate concerns for Christians at least in the Third World if not the world over. Others have implied that sustainability is their primary, if not exclusive, concern. Suggestions have been made that justice and participation should be the concern of poor and sustainability the focus for the wealthy. Some more recent discussions placed all three terms in necessary relation to each other.

The factors of definition and theology mentioned above strongly influenced the type of relationship envisaged between the three terms. Definitions which were highly limited in scope or exceptionally vague have made reconciliation of the terms more difficult. Over the years, however, as demonstrated in Part II, definitions of each of the terms have emerged which have related dimensions of justice, participation and sustainability to each other, and which have demonstrated a common concern to meet basic human need. The tendency in World Council discussions continued to favor making justice the primary goal of

society with participation and sustainability as ancillary categories.

5. A deep division has emerged over the nature of the JPSS and basic form of approach to be taken in exploring it. On the one hand, the sub-unit on Church and Society has portrayed JPSS as the new ecumenical vision for the future; a Christian utopia to be pursued. Although this has never meant to imply the provision of a Christian blue print for society which would detail every dimension of organization and interaction, it nevertheless represented a departure from the positions taken during the first twenty years of World Council history when strong and repeated cautions were raised against any attempts to define a Christian shape and direction for society.

On the other hand, the position has been taken in other World Council discussions examined in this study that the JPSS is an idea to be interpreted in light of concrete situations found among the poor and oppressed. Rather than defining the shape which the global community can take, it is necessary to examine unjust, nonparticipatory, unsustainable conditions and responses to them.

The former group at times achieved greater conceptual clarity. It is elitist, in the sense that its primary modes of operation have been the consultation or conference attended by the highly educated and comparatively affluent, and the production of materials which may

expand horizons and shape opinions. In following this procedure, the sub-unit on Church and Society was following the mandate it received in the 1971 restructuring proposal to work with those " . . . influencing the thought of men . . ." (See chapter 2 above).

The latter group was less interested in articulating its presuppositions (although one must be guided by some understanding of justice, participation and sustainability in order to determine where these do not exist), sought to identify with the poor and oppressed, and focused on case studies or "stories of the people" to illustrate its concerns. The tendency has been for the Church and Society discussions to concentrate, although certainly not exclusively, on issues related to affluent, high technology societies emphasizing the threat posed to humanity and creation by science and technology. The second group has focused attention on the poor and oppressed emphasizing the imperative to relieve their plight and affirm their dignity as the primary concern for Christian people.

6. A lack of historical perspective and awareness of the substance of earlier World Council and other ecumenical discussions has characterized Church and Society reports in particular and many of the other Council reports examined in this study as well. When a "new" awareness emerges it should be celebrated, but to

report problems which have been the topic of discussion for decades as though they have only recently come under consideration can have multiple affects. On the one hand, it is evidence of a failure feared from the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement: the issuing of statements which appear naive or ill informed. More importantly, this lack of historical perspective robs the participants in the discussions of a sense of the ongoing nature of the struggle and the benefits of the insights and perspectives gained through decades of reflection on difficult issues.

7. As was frequently the case with other projects in the past, the World Council has had extremely limited success in carrying the concept of JPSS to the constituent churches and their members. This has been due, at least in part, to the efforts to achieve a consensus on the meaning of JPSS within the Council itself.

Positive Accomplishments

The formulation of the concept of the Just, Participatory and Sustainable society and its exploration within the World Council have yielded some significant contributions to ecumenical dialogue. Among these, the following have emerged from the present study:

1. The concept of sustainability, although problematic in many respects, has introduced a new category for reflection which must be seriously considered in social, economic and political planning for the present and the future. While the concept is not confined to World Council discussions, these have contributed to the exploration of the implications of sustainability for the global community. The Church and Society sponsored programs in particular have also facilitated reflection on the implications of sustainability for the Christian faith and discussion of the concept from Christian perspectives.

2. Recognizing the absence of general agreement on JPSS, it may be said that at least from certain theological and ethical perspectives the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society has placed together three elements which are essential for a viable global community. JPSS represents, in effect, an expansion in both scope and specificity of the concept of the Responsible Society articulated at the inception of the World Council. This is not to say that the JPSS is simply a reprise of the Responsible Society: it is an independent formulation which includes dimensions never seriously considered in the Responsible Society conceptualization. It stands, not as a blueprint, but as a guide, and it continues to express the ecumenical concern for creative social

organization. It has offered some insight into what Christians can be "for" in society to supplement the repeated analyses of what is wrong and what should be opposed.

Over the years, before and after the formation of the World Council, the ecumenical movement has evidenced reluctance, in varying degrees, to state anything resembling a Christian ideology which might guide personal life and social organization. The articulation of the JPSS concept and some of the discussions surrounding it have revealed a greater willingness to indicate some type of Christian image of the basic principles of organization for human life and the relationship of humanity to the rest of creation. Some tentative steps have also been taken to suggest some ethical criteria which might guide decision making particularly in relation to science and technology.

While the World Council has ventured to speak of a Christian ideology, there is a growing awareness of the need to remain open to dialogue with persons of other faiths and ideologies. Appreciation exists for the fact that Christians have no monopoly on concerns for more just, more participatory and more sustainable societies. Christian perspectives are offered as possible guidelines for Christians not as absolute principles which all must embrace. They stand as the Christian contribution to what

will hopefully be a growing dialogue about what will make more creative life and interaction possible.

3. Out of the JPSS discussions have emerged some significant alternatives to the traditional understandings of the relationships between humanity, nature and God which had characterized earlier World Council discussions. This phenomenon has provided a clear example of a direct response to the plea of an Assembly, in this case New Delhi, for theological reflection in a particular area. While there is no general agreement on a single position, the introduction of process thought and Eastern Orthodox perspectives on humanity, nature and God have expanded and enriched ecumenical dialogue.

4. The expanding dialogue on faith and science has provided both increased understanding between and challenges to the religious and scientific communities. The 1971 structural reorganization of the World Council provided formal sanction for the sub-unit on Church and Society to pursue the concern for science and technology which had been on its agenda from the inception of the World Council. These discussions have not been characterized so much by a successful Christian challenge to the "scientific" world view. Rather they have provided opportunities for joint exploration of the nature and limitations of scientific knowledge and technological "progress", on the one hand, and serious explorations of

the contributions which technological reflection and Christian faith can make to understanding life and creation, on the other hand.

5. The JPSS Advisory Committee provided an opportunity for candid discussion and the exchange of widely divergent opinions within the World Council staff and Central Committee. If the component parts and the total JPSS concept are to be given the serious attention they deserve based on their implications for survival and their relationship to Christian faith then this type of honest struggle is essential, for the issues under consideration are matters of life and death for millions alive now and for generations yet unborn. Although the goal of producing a descriptive statement on JPSS was not realized, the Advisory Committee process should be considered a success in so far as it facilitated genuine, and at times heated, dialogue.

An Affirmation and Suggestions For Further Development

The problem under examination in the present study is concerned with the viability and potential inherent in the JPSS concept: Is the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society a viable compound principle which can guide and inform the evaluation of existing situations, responses to those situations, and the search for creative

alternatives for the future? Each of the three terms in the concept has been grounded in Christian faith and experience in a variety of ways in the course of ecumenical dialogue. Each of the terms has been asserted to be necessary for creative and continued existence on planet earth. A number of issues, some conceptual, others procedural require attention if the potential inherent in the JPSS concept is to be realized as an authentic expression of the Christian faith for the benefit of all creation.

Conceptual Issues

If the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society is to function as a viable guideline for present and future action the three central terms must be seen as: (a) each having certain unique and essential characteristics; (b) of equal importance; and, (c) at times being complementary and yet at other times being in tension with each other. Let us briefly consider each of these dimensions.

a. Conceptual formation of each of the terms: Chapters Three, Four and Five have detailed the development of the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability. Two basic questions are related to this issue of conceptual formation. One is concerned with the emergence of commonly agreed upon definitions. The

other centers upon the issue of the adequacy of development of the definitions which have appeared.

As the analyses presented above have indicated no commonly agreed upon definitions of justice, participation or sustainability have emerged thus far from ecumenical dialogue. This is not surprising given the nature of the ecumenical movement. The diversity of theological, social, ethical and political perspectives yields a broad range of beliefs and opinions which are not easily reconciled.

The second basic concern related to conceptual formulation is that of adequacy of development - to what degree are the meaning, content and rationale of a concept clear and coherent when it is applied. The 1937 Oxford Conference provided the most intentional presentation of a concept of justice. A summary of some dimensions of justice was offered in the report of the 1974 Bucharest Conference. We have seen in Chapter Three Duff's endorsement of Brunner's indictment of Protestant Christianity for its failure to develop a coherent theory of justice. That chapter also presented a variety of interpretations of justice which have appeared over the years; however, no fully developed concept has been offered in the ecumenical discussions under consideration.

In addition to general assertions about justice some indications about the basic nature of justice would be helpful. These would include: (a) a statement of the underlying determinative principle, i.e. merit, equality or need; (b) a precise and concise definition; (c) a statement of the authority claimed for the concept; and, (d) some of the supplemental criteria which would guide the application of the concept and its clear communication to others.¹

Inherent conflicts exist between some of the interpretations of justice which have emerged. For example, if we consider but two of these, the understanding of justice as the harmonious relation of life to life portends significantly different images of relationship and action from those which issue from the assertion that justice is God's radical bias for the poor and oppressed. Again, basic differences exist not only in terms of emphasis but also in philosophical and theological perspective between those who see justice as an anthropocentric category and those who affirm the intrinsic value and rights of non-human creations.

¹If, for example, justice is asserted to be God's radical bias in favor of the poor and oppressed, does this imply the abrogation of the rights of others. Or, if justice is interpreted as each person receiving what is due him or her can it be rightly assumed that the poor simply receive what is due them as the result of their laziness, ignorance, etc.

Bearing these difficulties in mind, a question remains concerning what insights into a concept of justice which can shape the JPSS have emerged in ecumenical dialogue. To answer this question we must begin by considering the basis and central focus offered for concepts of justice. Many of the formulations of justice examined in this study have been heavily or exclusively anthropocentric. In these justice appears as a category primarily related to human rights and well being. As we have seen above, some avenues of theological reflection have led to the affirmation of the intrinsic value and rights of all creation. These perspectives favor the articulation of a theocentric concept of justice which focuses upon God's creative activity and the divine intention for and pull on the whole created order.

The JPSS concept is most fully informed by this form of a theocentric concept of justice. In such a conceptualization justice flows from God's concern for and interaction with all of creation. Concern for the poor and oppressed within the human community is in no way minimized in such a theocentric perspective. Humanity, as the bearer of God's image, remains a primary, albeit not exclusive, concern. Justice then becomes an issue of the rights and value of all creation. Rights are not a function of property or position. They are a condition of creatureliness. Basic needs must be met,

and latitude must exist for the realization of creative potential. Therefore, justice does not exist to protect property nor to exact vengeance. Contrary to its classical portrayal, justice is not blind and impartial. It is clear-sighted and vitally concerned with violation of the rights and dignity of all creatures. Its primary attention is given to meeting the needs and establishing the rights of the poor and oppressed in all of creation.

Tensions may arise in implementing such a concept of justice. The Christian faith is centered on the belief that one suffered and died that the whole creation might find fulfillment in God. Thus situations in which many suffer that a few may prosper run counter to the essence of our faith. On the other hand, however, justice is not served by making the oppressed a new class of oppressors. The affluent need to surrender, willingly or unwillingly, power over the lives of others. But while the dynamics and structures of power and affluence must change, the basic needs and rights of all must be affirmed. Related to this is the need to give greater attention to the meaning and implications of justice within the affluent sections of societies in addition

to maintaining the major emphasis on justice between the affluent and the poor.²

Participation, as seen in Chapter Four, has been interpreted in a variety of ways. The western modes of participation by ballot and through the market place have been challenged, while many from the west have expressed difficulty in understanding the concern of many in the Third World for other forms of popular participation. One theme underlying many of the discussions concerning participation was the belief that increased popular involvement will automatically result in greater justice and wiser decisions. It has been argued in this study that this is not necessarily the case.

Many of the discussions considered above have called for the participation of every person in every decision affecting his or her life. While admitting that in most cases people should have greater involvement in making a number of decisions which will effect their lives, it must, nevertheless, be asked if it is necessary or desirable or possible to have every person involved in making every decision effecting their lives. To do so

²It is recognized that this suggestion presupposes a concept of justice which would encompass a broader range than those who advocate an exclusive concern with the poor may care to allow.

would require scales of social organization vastly different from those functioning in most parts of the globe. Any hope of some form of global community would have to be abandoned. Decision making takes time. To involve a person in decision-making about every issue which effects his or her life—placement of industries, products manufactured, location of retail outlets, salaries paid to self and others, location and types of roads and public transport, crops to be grown (even on other farms) and agricultural practices to be followed to name only a very few issues—would leave little time for carrying out any of the decisions.

The concept of global solidarity outlined at the end of Chapter Four provides a positive interpretation of participation for the JPSS. This model stresses the need to identify with the condition of others and to respond to that condition. It also recognizes that the forms of response may vary among regions and peoples as efforts are made to address commonly understood problems and conditions from different social, cultural, economic, political and geographical settings. The greatest initial challenge is to develop and nurture the sense of identity and solidarity. Thus, participation has a dual nature. Firstly, it refers to the need for increased authentic involvement by persons in making decisions which directly affect their lives. Secondly, it points to the

need for a growing awareness of global community and the importance of solidarity within that community.

Sustainability, as seen in Chapter Five, has been given two significantly different, and in some ways contradictory interpretations. The first of these has emphasized the disruptive and destructive impact of the human community upon creation and the need to formulate alternative patterns of activity which co-operate with God's creative endeavor. The second interpretation portrayed sustainability as an expression of God's providence over creation. This latter emphasis confuses rather than expands the concept of sustainability. It is essential for Christians to maintain an awareness of God's steadfast love and care for creation, but this need not and should not be subsumed under sustainability.

As indicated in Chapter Five, the concept of sustainability was forged out of a perspective which emphasized the finite nature of the earth and its resources. Advocates of sustainability are strongly influenced by this world view and its implications for growth. Some opponents have charged that this world view is distorted and alarmist; that it does not give ample consideration to the promises offered by technological innovation. Others have attacked sustainability on the grounds that it diverts attention from the desperate needs of the poor

and oppressed dying today. Those who see sustainability as a necessary concept have repeatedly expressed their concern for present as well as future generations, but many of their discussions have continued to focus on issues more closely related to affluent industrial societies.

Two theological issues have emerged concerning the relation between humanity, nature and God which should continue to receive attention. One deals with the understanding of non-human creation. Process thought has introduced into the discussions the concept of the intrinsic value of non-human creation. This perspective radically transforms the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. No longer are humans seen solely as "stewards" of a nature which God has made available for their use, sustenance and enjoyment; rather, humanity must seek to understand the rights of non-human creation and respond justly to those rights. Such a theological position has far reaching implications for personal choice and social institutions and structures.

Two avenues of exploration require further attention at this juncture. Advocates of process thought need to share more fully in ecumenical dialogue elements of a "process ethic" for sustainability and its implications for structural and institutional change. Secondly,

the discussions between those western theologians affirming the rights of nature and persons from the younger churches and the third world should be expanded. As noted in Chapter Six, Church and Society discussions have been influenced by process thought, but other perspectives have been voiced. All could benefit by more direct interaction and exchange.

The second major theological question which appears to remain unanswered in ecumenical literature since it was raised in the Futurum Study (Chapter Five) is whether we can hope for historical fulfillment in the face of the human potential to destroy the biosphere as we know it, either over time through pollution and destruction or more suddenly through cataclysmic war. Appeals to providence within the concept of sustainability are unsatisfactory. Followed to its logical conclusions, the interpretation of sustainability which stresses that providence will preserve creation makes a concern for environmental destruction appear as "much ado about nothing," for God will guarantee the integrity of nature. If not dismissed, however, this theological issue raises serious questions about the nature and consequences of sin, humanity's relation to God, and the role of humanity in the created order.

Sustainability offers a number of contributions to the conceptualization of the JPSS. The ecological principle, stressing the relational nature of all creation, and a deep awareness of the finitude and vulnerability of nature provide a basic world view. Related to these is a concern to control science and technology to the end of limiting their negative impact while maximizing their positive potential. In addition, sustainability emphasizes the responsibility of the present human community to preserve a livable world for future generations. In light of the fact that some have questioned this concern for the future two factors must be mentioned. Firstly, at no time in the discussions under consideration has it been suggested that the contemporary poor and oppressed be held in subjection to preserve a future for the grand children of the affluent. Secondly, this concern for a viable future must not be seen solely as a utopian ideal. Sustainability issues a direct challenge to the reaction mode fostered by a belief in technological self-sufficiency. It is becoming increasingly dangerous to rely on human ability to respond to and rectify environmental disruption and destruction as we become aware of the impact of technologies on the biosphere. Confidence in human ability to react successfully to problems must be increasingly supplemented by analysis

and planning which give greater consideration to the risks and consequences involved in technological applications. Concern for sustainable societies must condition present action and future plans.

Although some of the meanings of justice, participation and sustainability in the JPSS have been outlined above each of these terms requires further elaboration independently and in relation to a variety of other issues and concepts. Much of this must be done in dialogue, but it must involve not only the sharing of thoughts but also the interaction of praxis. It is necessary to go beyond invoking "justice" to formulation of a concept which guides and informs action, and which can not only indict but also inspire others. Such potential exists in dimensions of justice which have emerged in ecumenical discussions over the years (see Chapter 3), but it remains to be fully realized. The development of a theocentric concept of justice would facilitate the identification of injustice. It would also guide the search for more just actions and institutions which would respect the rights and dignity of all creation.

Sustainability may provide images of the future, but it must increasingly inform present decisions and actions; not as an excuse to ignore or oppress the poor, but as a guide to meet existing needs responsibly. For

many, sustainability also indicates a new understanding of the relationships between human and non-human creation and God.

Participation is qualitatively more than everyone having a voice in everything, while realizing that at the present time many have almost no voice in anything. It points not only to authentic involvement at the local level, but also to increased understanding and diverse, but complementary, action in a global community.

Conceptual development is called for neither as a prerequisite to action nor as an academic exercise. It is called for to strengthen and inform action and to facilitate the communication of concerns held vital within the World Council to constituent churches and their members and all who share similar concerns.

b. Equality of terms: Repeated efforts have been made, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, to assert the primacy of justice within the JPSS formulation. Other discussions reported within that chapter indicated that sustainability was the primary concern by implication and emphasis if not by direct articulation. And, in one instance participation was proposed as the central concern for contemporary Africa. It is neither necessary nor desirable to assert the primacy of one term over the others. Justice, participation and sustainability each

have their own particular characteristics, as the summaries to the chapters of Part II and the discussion in section a above have demonstrated. Each term has been interpreted as theologically and existentially essential for creative and continued existence. Each of the terms in its own way, has been shown to speak to the relationships of people to people, of humanity to nature and of the whole creation to God.

c. Relationship of terms within JPSS: Conceptually no term is diminished by association with the others, and each makes its own contribution to the JPSS concept. Within the JPSS the three central terms are inseparably related. The combination of justice, participation and sustainability creates a compound principle which incorporates three essential dimensions of the Christian understanding of life and creation. This constellation of concepts significantly transcends perspectives based on only one of the three central elements. The analysis of an existing situation or the proposal of future actions or images of the future based on the consideration of one or even two of the major terms does not necessarily reflect a concern with or a contribution to the struggle for a JPSS. Not all discussions invoking justice or expressing concern for some dimension of sustainability can automatically be assumed to reflect concern for a

just, participatory and sustainable society. A Christian understanding of society requires the consideration of all three concepts and the implications of their interaction with each other.

As Chapter Six has demonstrated champions of justice and sustainability have both found accommodation with varying dimensions of participation. Advocates of sustainability have periodically affirmed the importance of justice, but those whose primary concern is justice have often been suspicious of, or openly hostile to, sustainability. On the one hand, these critiques of sustainability must not be ignored or dismissed as unfounded or unreasonable. The desperate plight of millions of human beings and the manipulation of debates and political and economic situations whether by default or design give credence to such concern.

On the other hand, however, some of these quarrels appeared to originate from misunderstandings of the meaning of sustainability. For example, at no point in the recorded JPSS discussions and their antecedents examined above was it asserted that non-human creation be given superior or even equal value to human life. Nor was it ever suggested that present generations be allowed to suffer and die in order to secure a future for others.

Other accusations seemed to grow out of suspicions about sustainability and its advocates. As noted in Chapters

Five and Six, the earliest discussions of sustainability included explicit references to the need for equitable distribution of scarce resources, increased participation in making social decisions, and regional differentiation. Assertions were also made concerning the need to improve the quality of life among the poor while limiting certain types of growth among the affluent. Frequently the arguments challenging sustainability reflected either a lack of awareness of these dimensions of the concept, or a failure to take them seriously. In the context of ecumenical discussion the theological and historical foundations underlying the development of the concept of sustainability support the conclusion that it was not conceived as a ruse to distract the rich and to continue the oppression of the poor. A more positive interpretation is also supported by the breadth of concerns incorporated in the articulation of the concept. Some critics of sustainability appear at times to lack appreciation for the fact that those concerned about sustainability were guided, and one must believe sincerely and authentically, by reasoned and deeply held theological convictions combined with alarming perceptions of present realities and future possibilities.

Sustainability was not presented as an abstract, absolute principle to be applied arbitrarily to the rich or the poor. Its positive potential resides in its call

to humanity to discover the proper human role in the whole of creation, and the accompanying emphasis on the need to control science and technology in order to make possible the assumption of that role.

The JPSS discussions have asserted that only a just society can be sustainable. It may also be asserted that only a sustainable society can be just; not only in terms of issues related to the rights of nature, but also when social, political, and economic sustainability are considered in addition to ecological sustainability.

The relationship between justice, participation and sustainability is not to be found in giving primacy to one term or in attempts to define two of the elements in terms of the third. A dynamic tension is required which calls for the analysis of and response in each situation, existing or envisioned, from the perspectives offered by justice, participation and sustainability. Such analysis would facilitate the consideration and inclusion of positive dimensions which would not emerge in programs conducted from a single perspective. Approaches which are more just, more participatory and more sustainable could emerge. It must be realized that the tensions existing between the various perspectives may also appear more clearly. To date, however, emphasis has generally been placed on the areas of potential conflict between justice and sustainability, rather than on exploration of the many areas of

complementarity which apply to concrete situations.

A number of these areas have emerged in Part II of this study. Discussions related to each of the three concepts have reflected concern for fair distribution of material resources, equal opportunity and sharing power. Justice and sustainability express common areas of concern in the principle of proportional responsibility outlined in Chapter Five, and in the emphasis on the improvement of the quality of life for all persons. The theocentric concept of justice outlined above also extends the area of commonality with sustainability. Participation and sustainability are naturally linked through their concern for global solidarity and the concept of participation through cooperation with God's creative action. The exploration of some examples will illustrate the application of the compound principle to concrete situations.

In the early nineteen seventies the British-American Tobacco Company (BAT) moved aggressively into the Meru District of Kenya.³ The major focus of the BAT program was to encourage small farmers (average farm size of ten acres) to grow tobacco on their own farms. The program employed a variety of incentives, including technological

³In 1978 the author began serving with the Methodist Church in Kenya as its rural development coordinator in Meru District.

advice, seedlings and required applications at reduced prices, and promises of amenities such as improved housing and domestic water supply systems. It was enthusiastically embraced by many small farmers who looked forward to increased income and improved styles of living. In the initial stages of the program the cash income of many of these farmers was significantly increased. Certain other factors require consideration, however:

a. Kenya has not produced enough food to meet domestic requirements during recent years. Yet, through the efforts of BAT Kenya now produces enough tobacco to meet domestic demand.

b. The deleterious effects of tobacco consumption are well known and widely documented in the United States.

c. The tobacco grown in Meru district is fire cured. For every acre of tobacco grown one acre of timber is required for the curing process. This is resulting in the rapid deforestation of the tobacco growing areas.

d. In the wake of this deforestation soil erosion rates are increasing dramatically and water tables are receding.

While in the short term the small farmers and BAT are realizing profits, in the long term, yet well within the life time of persons now living in the area, the small farmers will be faced with mounting problems of

how to meet their basic needs with significantly depleted soils and water tables. BAT publicizes the fact that they distribute thousands of tree seedlings annually at subsidized cost. The planting of seedlings on areas totally stripped of indigenous cover will not stem the initial environment damage, however. In addition, the average farm size does not permit most small farmers to plant several acres in trees in order to meet the fuel requirements for curing.

The application of the JPSS principle to this situation includes consideration of the following dimensions. In relation to justice: Do incentive programs such as these reflect respect for the rights and dignity of the local people or of their environment? To whom do the major benefits accrue? What are the major risks involved for persons and for resources? Who has the most at stake?

Two major areas of concern emerge in relation to participation. The first deals with the involvement of local people in exploring the impact of the program and its consequences for them, for their children and for their environment. Related to this is increased local involvement in the exploration of alternative crops, cropping systems and marketing systems which might yield increased income and a more positive impact on society and the environment.

Secondly, the question of solidarity within the global community requires examination. BAT's involvement in Meru District is a prime example of private industry "developing" agriculture in a third world nation. In 1981 the Reagan administration proposed that private enterprise be given the primary responsibility of stimulating agricultural production in the third world. Persons in the United States should challenge such proposals by their government in light of actions such as those of BAT. In so doing they can demonstrate a significant form of solidarity with the small farmers of Kenya and participate in addressing the problem with actions which can be effective and appropriate, although those actions will differ greatly from those being taken by the farmers of Kenya.

Sustainability requires that attention be given to the impact of such agricultural practices on the area. Could the production of fire cured tobacco be carried on over a long period of time in this manner? What is the impact on soil and water? Does this type of program and the control of it by BAT represent a viable and sustainable form of social, economic and political interaction over the long term?

Let us examine a second example and continue to explore the application of the JPSS principle. Within the same general area of BAT operations in Meru District,

farmers have been forced, due to scarcity of arable land and increased population, to increasingly cultivate steep hillsides in order to provide food for their families. Severe soil erosion frequently results from the utilization of flat land farming practices on these hillsides. Our definition of justice requires that, out of respect for the rights and dignity of persons, their basic needs be met. Sustainability lifts up the need to organize life in such a way that creative relationships may be maintained over time. Through the application of the JPSS principle some viable alternatives begin to emerge.

By the application of appropriate technologies related to terracing and small mixed farming systems, soil and water can be preserved and utilized while enabling farmers to increase food production and income. Increased participation at the local level through consciousness-raising activities can help farmers understand their situation in new ways and explore alternative courses of action to change and better control their lives as they choose. At a second level, through participation in solidarity, persons beyond the small farms can begin to examine their involvement in economic and political structures--purchasing patterns, foreign policies, aid programs, national policies, marketing systems, business practices, etc.--and seek more creative structures and relationships. At both levels attention would be directed toward issues such

as land tenure, the pricing of agricultural commodities and the control of their marketing, forms of economic and political power and privilege at the local, national and international level, and technologies and resources available to the small farmer.

The factors cited in these examples are illustrative and not exhaustive. Nevertheless, they provide some insight into how the principle of the just, participatory and sustainable society can be applied to assist in the evaluation of a particular situation. They also illustrate how the JPSS concept can guide the exploration for alternatives which will lead to more just, more participatory and more sustainable societies.

A third example can be cited which will help in the exploration of the dynamics at work between justice and sustainability. Malaria has long been a scourge in the tropical areas of the world. The emergence in recent years of virulent strains of cerebral malaria some of which are quinine resistant have worsened the threat posed by this disease. It is also recognized that DDT, one of the most effective agents in controlling the anophelines mosquito, dissipates slowly in the environment. Residual concentrations have been demonstrated to have deleterious effects on human and animal populations.

A question thus arises concerning whether or not DDT should be used to control mosquitos and save lives now despite the residual chemical buildup which may pose a threat to present and future humans and animals. In effect, a central problem posed by the use of DDT spraying in mosquito abatement concerns a tension between the right of existing persons to be free from malaria and the right of future generations to inherit a livable environment.

Sustainability, on the one hand, points to the need to consider the long-term consequences of an act which appears to be generally beneficial. On the other hand, it can stimulate a search for abatement technologies which are effective but which do not have such harmful residual effects. In this case concern for sustainability may prove helpful in resolving what is primarily a dilemma posed between justice for present and future generations.

As these examples indicate, at the level of practical implementation the JPSS principle provides a dynamic and creative perspective. The World Council discussions examined above frequently demonstrated that at the theoretical level it is easy to create a variety of tensions between justice, participation and sustainability. In applying the JPSS principle in the context of concrete situations, however, the complementarity of the central

terms and the contribution made by the perspective which results from the interaction and dialogue between justice, participation and sustainability becomes apparent. These three concepts are not placed together in order that they may serve as checks and balances on each other. Rather, the compound principle represented by the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society forms a complementary system of three essential dimensions of God's intention for creation.

The concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society can provide a focus for a new Christian ethos. Such a perspective could be doubly beneficial. Christians could be nurtured in developing a "new" world view and in forming alternative ethical criteria and responses which would facilitate compliance with the call to be in the world and for the world but not of it. In effect, the JPSS would be a guiding compound principle. Current actions and future plans would be evaluated in terms of JPSS perspectives.⁴

Secondly, the JPSS concept could provide a nexus for Christian dialogue with other faiths and ideologies:

⁴During the period of the JPSS emphasis some attempts at applying the method of dialectical interaction were evident. A tendency often persisted, however, to approach particular situations inductively.

not as a dogmatic and final word, but rather as one method of focusing the Christian contribution in the dialogue on the present plight and future possibilities for humanity in particular and creation as a whole.

Justice, participation and sustainability combined provide a vision of the Christian understanding of a viable and creative society. We have seen the JPSS referred to as the new ecumenical vision of the future. In general, a world is envisioned where poverty and oppression are overcome rather than perpetuated; where persons have a role in determining their own lives and where a sense of solidarity in the global community is lived out; where the relation of each to all is respected; and, where concern for the present and future guide the development and application of technology.

But the full potential of the JPSS is not posited in the vision of the future which it proclaims. Much of its value is found in the guidance which it provides in evaluating existing conditions and assisting the formulation of responses and structures which are more just, more participatory and more sustainable. In effect, the JPSS can be a goal, a guide and a yardstick. While it may offer a utopian vision it can also be invaluable in identifying unjust, non-participatory and unsustainable conditions and structures and in helping to shape creative

alternatives. Thus, what is called for is a combination of the two perspectives represented in the World Council discussions. The JPSS concept must be given some preliminary definition so that it can provide a challenging vision for contemporary Christians. Basic definition will also be required if the JPSS is to function as a guide in concrete situations. But it is in the application of the JPSS principle in particular contexts that its full potential is realized and it is through praxis that its meaning will be expanded.

The JPSS is not a new name for the Kingdom of God. Neither does it supply a blue print for the present or future, although it is intensely concerned with both. It is a compound principle comprised of three concepts, each of which represents significant and necessary dimensions of existence from the Christian perspective. This combination of justice, participation and sustainability as the criteria for creative societies reflects an awareness that these three concepts must be considered together in terms of the implications which the requirements of one may present for the others. Bearing in mind the foregoing discussions, the following formulations of the three central concepts has been suggested:

Justice is a theocentric concept emphasizing respect for the rights and dignity of all creation, with

primary attention being given to the affirmation of the rights of the poor and oppressed.

Participation centers on global solidarity which facilitates understanding and complementary action to address injustice and to shape more creative structures.

Sustainability points to the relational nature of all creation and stresses the need for humanity to control its activity and technology in ways which nurture life and cooperate with God's creative activity.

Procedural Issues

Having affirmed the value of the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society for the evaluation of existing conditions and as a guide for future planning attention must be given to steps which might be taken by the World Council of Churches to pursue the potential of the concept. Procedural concerns arise in two basic areas: (1) in-house discussions and actions related primarily to unit and sub-unit staffs and the Central Committee; and, (2) the relationship existing between the World Council staff and study programs and the member churches.

1. Within the World Council staff and administrative structure a number of steps could be taken to facilitate the creative pursuit of the JPSS concept:

A. Clearer definition of the nature and role of a "common program emphasis" within the World Council is needed. As has been the case thus far with the JPSS concept such an emphasis may function primarily as a call to debate rather than as an expression of common concern. When this occurs, the opportunity for honest and candid dialogue should be maximized. No attempt should be made to force a common statement or position prematurely.

B. In-house dialogue should be continued and broadened, within and between program units. It was noted in Chapter Six that the sub-unit on Church and Society, while pursuing its own program on JPSS, had not always responded fully to the opportunities presented by discussions held within the Council. Creative and cooperative participation will be necessary from all units if common emphases are to make a positive contribution to World Council programming. These discussions must be characterized by an openness to contribute to and learn from the theological and existential perspectives of others.

The political forces at work within the World Council undoubtedly affect the nature of in-house discussions and they cannot be ignored. Program units and sub-units spend much time and energy developing their programs and must then secure approval and requisite funding for their implementation. If the Central Committee is to

produce "a statement" on an issue or emphasis units with divergent positions will undoubtedly strive to make their position the dominant one. Such pressures can enliven and stimulate discussion. They can also divert attention from the consideration of deeper issues to a focus on "selling" a position already held and cherished. In this sense, the approach to a concept such as the just, participatory and sustainable society should be "de-politicized" within World Council discussions. Once again, this could be facilitated by not seeking a common statement prematurely.

C. A need for greater clarity (although not necessarily consensus) of definitions remains. The frequent failure by individuals or groups involved in ecumenical discussion to provide some coherent understanding of what is meant by justice, participation and sustainability has rendered many of their pronouncements unconvincing and ambiguous.

Although it is premature to expect a single understanding of each of the three central concepts to guide ecumenical pronouncements, it is not unreasonable to request participants in discussions to clarify what they mean when they use them. All would benefit from sharing with each other at least some dimensions of: (a) the basic meaning of each concept; (b) the applications of those concepts; and, (c) the authority claimed for their positions.

Force and direction will be added to statements, injunctions, or condemnations if those issuing them can, even briefly, indicate what they mean when they invoke the JPSS concept and its central terms. This basic procedure would not only facilitate conceptual clarity; it would enhance global, cross-cultural communication and facilitate the development of a common contemporary strategy and of future planning.

D. Units and sub-units should be challenged to apply the JPSS principle in their discussions and programing. Those who focus primarily upon questions related to sustainability should exercise the discipline of exploring the implications of justice and participation for the issues they consider. Those emphasizing justice and participation should apply the compound principle in corresponding fashion. This application would require additional time and effort, but the JPSS concept would help build a sense of solidarity and would vitally expand the perspectives of those employing it.

2. During the period under consideration the concept of a just, participatory and sustainable society was confined to a large extent to World Council discussions. Further consideration must be given to the relationship of such a concept to the thought and ministry of the constituent churches.

A. The JPSS discussions should be opened to the churches. Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive or final definition of JPSS, efforts should be made to engage churches and their members in the JPSS dialogue. This does not mean that the program units and the central committee would no longer give explicit consideration to the JPSS concept. Their continued interest in and exploration of the concept would be essential, but the products of their labors would be viewed, not as definitive, but as contributions to the expanding dynamics of dialogue and praxis.

B. In light of the revised constitution for the World Council of Churches adopted in 1975, which posited one of the major "functions and purposes" of the Council as "facilitating the common witness" and expressing the common concern" of the churches, the failure to achieve some "common" understanding of the JPSS assumes a more serious nature. Areas of common concern among the churches on some dimensions of social issues do exist and should be affirmed and pursued. The present study has indicated that sharp and substantial differences also exist.

At this point the solution is not to be found in deferring statements and action until consensus is reached on definition of terms. Rather, consideration should be given to reintroducing into the constitution of the World Council those provisions which recognize and respect the

diversity of opinion, tradition and experience present within the World Council of Churches.

Over the years the Council has moved increasingly toward positions of advocacy. Where this is possible, it is to be affirmed. Advocacy, however, requires a degree of common conceptual agreement and development which is not necessary in open discussion and exploration of issues. Often the unified conceptual, theological and ethical foundations necessary to render positions advocated compelling for Christians or convincing to others have been weak or absent. The present study has indicated that within the World Council there are widely divergent perceptions and opinions about the nature of and response to a vast array of vital issues.⁵ The Church must be an arena for struggle in which all who name Christ's name can dare to share divergent views honestly, as all seek to understand God's will and purpose for the whole creation.

The modern ecumenical movement has, from its beginnings early in this century, served as a forum for the

⁵At that, World Council discussions have tended to reflect only a relatively narrow portion of the spectrum of opinions held and research done by Christian people on a variety of major social issues. Little evidence is found of positions advocating traditional capitalist economic positions, growth and expansion, the necessity of strong military policies and concepts related to these. This is cited simply to underscore the fact that a much wider diversity of opinion exists in Christendom than that already reflected in recent World Council discussions.

discussion of significant social issues from a variety of Christian perspectives. The World Council of Churches by its very nature can and must continue to play a significant role in this task. The common bond of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism . . ." must be nurtured and strengthened among Christian people everywhere. In order to recognize this basic element of the World Council and affirm the benefits which come from honest sharing of differing perspectives on vital issues, the Council should reintroduce the purpose of "promoting cooperation in study" in its constitution, while retaining the provisions which authorize the pursuit of "common" concerns. In addition, the possibilities for greater understanding, inter-action and cooperation presented by dialogue with persons of other faiths and ideologies should be pursued at as many levels as possible.

B. As the present study has indicated, a recurring complaint throughout the history of the World Council has centered around the generally low level of impact of Council positions on social issues in member churches. If the discussion of the JPSS concept is to be opened to the churches, new avenues of communication must be explored. Christian education curricula and devotional materials are two types of literature which receive comparatively wide circulation and attention among local congregations. The sub-unit on Church and Society and other units interested

in JPSS should explore the possibility of holding regional or international conferences and workshops with denominational personnel responsible for writing and publishing educational and devotional materials. It is beyond both the responsibility and the ability of the World Council to prepare such materials itself. The Council could, however, play a significant role in facilitating the exploration of the JPSS by church officials responsible for the preparation and dissemination of these materials.

C. In Chapter Six the accusation was recorded that the definition and exploration of the JPSS concept up to that point had been dominated by "western" methods and perspectives. That concern must not be too easily dismissed. The sub-unit on Church and Society has focused primarily upon a conference centered approach in its inquiries. Even an event such as a World Council Assembly is elitist in view of the fact that the comparatively small number of persons present are frequently chosen on the basis of ability or "political" considerations. On the other hand, it must be recognized that the conference and assembly approaches have produced some remarkable and valuable concepts and dialogues. The insights gained from knowledgeable people gathering to examine difficult issues in the context of the Christian faith must not be lost. On the other hand, however, varying patterns of identifying,

analysing, and approaching difficult issues exist among different cultures. If diversity and scale are to be valued as something more than abstract principles, efforts should be made to incorporate alternative social and cultural patterns in exploring problems. Again it must be noted that to expand and modify methods will require additional time and probably additional resources, but to continue to place primary emphasis on conferences for the sake of familiarity and expediency is to deny in practice what is espoused as principle.⁶

D. Reference has been made in the present study to the lack of historical perspective reflected in many assembly and Church and Society documents. Staff should accept the responsibility of providing brief summaries of "the discussion to date in ecumenical dialogues" on the major issues to be considered at assemblies and conferences. Such publications would provide historical and thematic context for the discussions and better prepare the participants to further the debate.

⁶Within and beyond the World Council it is neither necessary, nor desirable for everyone to do everything the same way. As noted above the mandate for Church and Society gave it the task of dealing particularly with an elite group. The product of those discussions has often been stimulating and challenging. Some diversity can perhaps best be accomplished by various sub-units utilizing differing approaches and yet recognizing the contribution made by each.

Epilogue

The JPSS stands as a declaration that present societies are judged and future societies must be conditioned by the concepts of justice, participation and sustainability. This may be argued on the basis that to fail to apply this compound principle will result in continued oppression and in the destruction of life now, and will render the support of life in the future highly questionable. Equally profound, from the Christian perspective, has been the assertion that justice, participation and sustainability are essential elements in God's interaction with creation.

To date few common agreements have emerged within the World Council on the nature and application of justice, participation and sustainability. Such agreement is not necessary, and perhaps not even desirable, for the tremendous diversity and change at work within the global community require openness and flexibility. While not requiring unanimity, the present study has called upon Christian people to consider all three dimensions of a just, participatory, and sustainable society and their implications for each other as we examine existing situations and hope for the future.

In essence, the JPSS principle may be summarized as the striving for creative relationships within and between

humanity, non-human creation and God. These relationships are characterized by affirmations of the rights and dignity of human and non-human others; by an openness to the authentic participation of others and the requirement of effective participation by oneself; by an awareness of the finitude of our own lives and of our fragile world; by a commitment to control science and technology; and, by endeavors to understand and cooperate with God's creative intention and action.

Poverty and oppression; exclusion, ignorance and self-centeredness; limited perspectives and unlimited greed characterize much of our world. The just, participatory and sustainable society affirms that there are alternative modes of relating to each other, to nature, and to God. Such a stance calls for sincere efforts to understand the conditions and plight of other persons and of non-human creation, and to act in concert to address those conditions. The nature of actions may differ according to place, time, culture and present political and economic status. Yet, it will be remembered that what is of most significance is not identity of action, but solidarity in seeking to redress existing wrong and to chart a creative future responsive to the needs of the created order and God's love and purpose in that order for justice, participation and sustainability.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

FUTURUM PROSPECTUS

Prospects of Technological Change

A great range of problems demand attention and one of the first tasks in this study will be to select the most critical from such concerns as:

1. The need for a positive policy with regard to environment including protection against pollution and other side-effects of a technical civilization;
2. Population and world food supply;
3. The establishment of national and international structures of justice so as to relate technological possibilities to the social aspirations of mankind;
4. The problem of the influence of military power and concerns on technological development;
5. Planning for urban development in view of the crises which rapid technological change creates and the clash of interests in city life;
6. The new challenge of space and the oceans;
7. Implications of progress in genetic and biochemical research for the control of human life or its improvement, for example for birth, life (including longevity), mood control, and death;
8. The stress on consumption and the creation of new consumer demands arising from the productivity of modern science-based industry;
9. The revolution in producing and storing information, techniques of communication, and their consequences for education and influencing public opinion (e.g., impact of television on traditional social institutions, the family, political organizations, etc.)

The Problem of Social Justice in a Future Perspective

Among the political-economic issues to be explored are:

1. The impact of technological change on patterns of ownership and control of industrial production and the consequences for our understanding of the responsible use of power in economic affairs.

2. The challenge of technological change to traditional patterns of political organization and decision-making; the need for new forms of political participation in complex societies dominated by technical experts and mass communication; the challenge to classical patterns of democracy;

3. The results of technological change for narrowing or widening the economic and political gap between the rich and the poor nations;

4. Transformation of the ideas involved in "the rule of law" to meet the changed conditions of a technical society;

5. Non-violent forms and strategies for effecting revolutionary social change;

6. The social and human consequences of increasing leisure and decreasing need for work;

7. The disenchantment of many youth with the present and the options they propose for the future.

Theological and Ethical Questions

A proper theological understanding of the Churches' responsibility for man's future may most creatively emerge from the encounter of Christian faith and tradition with various ideologies and with the insights of the social and natural sciences. This will involve dialogue with certain points of view: science-based technological planning; revolutionary ideologies, Marxist and others; perspectives on the human future arising from other religions and cultures; insights derived from experience in political, economic and social leadership at various levels of society.

Three forms of openness for the future are important for Christian understanding and action: 1. Projection of future possibilities on the basis of present trends in a strictly predictive sense; 2. anticipation of possible structures of the future which a worthy human life would make imperative; 3. presence and expectation of the coming Kingdom of God in judgment and redemption.

It is in the second of these that the most urgent theological tasks arise, though the first and third provide essential insight and guidance. Our problem is to discern in the light of the Gospel what realistic hopes we may have for human society in the midst of its present crisis and possibilities so that the Churches, and all men of good will, may be moved to turn these hopes into reality. For this, careful theological work must be done in the following areas (in close collaboration with those working on parts A and B).

1. The meaning of justice in a technological age, and the effects of advanced technology on the human and natural environment; the question of human rights and freedoms is a part of this issue.

2. The function and control of technological, economic and political power in the interests of human welfare. To this question belongs the problem of legitimate authority, its role and limits.

3. Radical social change and the forms it may rightly take in the light of God's purposes.

4. The form which a truly human life in society may take in the future given a proper understanding of man, his motivations and his destiny. The role of racial and cultural differences in defining this humanity is one critical issue. The restructuring of human life by technological determination of environment and by biochemical interference with the human body itself is another issue (e.g., if one can construct any psyche desired, how does one discern what the true meaning and end of human life may be?)

5. The question of the forms of human community which the future will bring, and the forms of Christian community within it. Theology is not only works; it is life. Careful attention must be given to the forms of the Christian community of the future which will be witnesses to the Kingdom it anticipates, and transformers of its environment.

Appendix B

STATEMENTS ON SOCIAL ISSUES 1925-1938

Stockholm 1925

We contend for the free and full development of the human personality.

In the name of the Gospel we have affirmed that industry should not be based solely on the desire for individual profit, but that it should be conducted for the service of the community.

Property should be regarded as a stewardship for which an account must be given to God.

Cooperation between capital and labor should take the place of conflict, so that employers and employed alike may be enabled to regard their part in industry as the fulfillment of a vocation.

London 1930

The conference urges the demand for research into the causes of unemployment and into the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the measures taken against unemployment, so as to study the whole situation from the Christian standpoint.

The Church must strengthen the determination of the community to fight both the effects and causes of unemployment.

The ultimate control of the world's industrial machine is being rested in ever fewer and fewer hands. The major factor in the matter is the inescapable logic of the situation, which leaves only a minor importance to the controlling mind of man.

We have to consider whether control of industry rests in the hands of financiers, and whether financiers at present have either the knowledge or the ability to guide industry to its maximum service to mankind--or whether they even regard it to be their function.

The question should be examined whether the real reasons for the world economic depression and consequently also for world unemployment do not lie in the fact that till now the aim of economic policy of all industrial states has been a "favorable balance of trade," or in other words, a permanent excess of exports.

The problem of the world's prosperity is primarily a problem of distribution.

The question whether personal leadership and personal responsibility have any play in a more and more depersonalized system of industry and whether through the influence of the Churches on the leaders of industry, the solution of social problems can be effectively furthered, demands special attention both from a theoretical and practical point of view.

As regards labor, satisfaction created by one's daily work must be a first concern of industrial organization.

Basle 1932

Unemployment attaches no stigma to those upon whom it falls.

Unemployment is the symptom of continuous maladjustments in economic life.

We consider that the question as to whether the former possibilities of economic expansion which have existed so far have not come to an end, or at any rate, are limited for the present and for the immediate future, is a very serious problem.

An effective reduction of armaments is not only a necessary prerequisite to the restoration of confidence between nations but would also be an effective aid tending to better regulation or international indebtedness. Therefore new international agreements on indebtedness should be entered upon only on the assurance that, as a result thereof, the savings effected in governmental expenditure will not be nullified by an increase of expenditure upon armaments.

Insofar as the education of public opinion, above all the stirring of the public conscience, is an indispensable prerequisite, the Church must be ready to assume the fullest responsibility.

Rengsdorf 1933

In every economic order the following principles must be maintained:

- (a) Work as a duty of man;
- (b) Property as a loan entrusted to man by God,
and as a stewardship of which account has to be given;

- (c) Economic activity as a service to the community;
- (d) The subjection of economic life to the demands of justice.

Oxford 1937

The competitive superiority of large scale production has gone far to destroy the old traditional society of craftsmen and farmers, and thereby has created a society which is characterized in many countries by the concentration of wealth, on the one hand, and the existence of large urban masses on the other.

The predominance of the profit motives has tended to deprive the worker of the social meaning of his work and has encouraged hostility between the members of different groups in their economic relationship.

Leading industrial and financial groups have been tempted to obtain the support of the state for their particular interests.

The recent mechanization of agricultural production has also drawn predominantly agrarian areas in many parts of the world into a process of rapid transformation.

The Churches had become deeply involved in the social and cultural attitudes of the wealthier members of society, upon whom they were frequently dependent, politically and economically.

The direction of Christian effort in relation to the economic order should henceforth be turned from charitable paternalism to the realization of more equal justice in the distribution of wealth.

Christians who live in the more privileged geographical areas must recognize that the securing of economic plenty and greater justice in its distribution within their respective national groups is not the whole of their duty in this connection; they cannot escape some measure of responsibility for those areas where for years to come there will doubtless be desperate economic need.

Points at which the Christian understanding of life is challenged:

1. The enhancement of acquisitiveness

When the necessary work of society is so organized as to make the acquisition of wealth the chief criterion of success it encourages a feverish scramble for money, and a false respect for the victors in the struggle, which is as fatal in its moral consequences as any other form of idolatry.

2. Inequalities

Not only is the product of industry distributed with an inequality so extreme that a small minority of the

population are in receipt of incomes exceeding in the aggregate those of many times their number, but--even more seriously--the later are condemned throughout their lives to environmental evils which the former escape, and are deprived of the opportunities of fully developing their powers, which are accessible, as a matter of course, to their more fortunate fellows.

3. Irresponsible Possession of Economic Power

A third feature of the existing situation which is repugnant to the Christian conscience consists in the power wielded by a few individuals or groups who are not responsible to any organ of society.

4. The Frustration of the Sense of Christian Vocation

Most [workers] are directly conscious of working for the profit of the employer (and for the sake of their wages) and only indirectly conscious of working for any public good.

Many workers must produce things which are useless, shoddy or destructive.

One other form of work which seems clearly to be in conflict with the Christian's vocation is salesmanship of a kind which involves deception.

The call to Christians to repent and submit their lives anew to God in Christ has to be obeyed in the midst of the concrete realities of the common life, where decisions have to be taken and acts with all their irrevocable consequences done. Perplexities and problems at once arise.

Jerusalem 1928

1. The problems presented by the investment of capital in undeveloped areas and the necessity of securing that it takes place on terms compatible with the welfare and progress of indigenous peoples.

2. The necessity, in developing the natural resources of such areas, both of protecting indigenous peoples and of securing the utilization of their resources for the service of the world as a whole, on terms compatible with such people's welfare.

3. The obligation resting on the governments of the economically more advanced countries to secure that economically less developed peoples are protected against economic and social injustice, and share fully and equitably in the fruits of economic progress.

4. The vital importance of securing that the political and economic action of different nations interested in economic expansion does not continue to produce the friction between such nations which has hitherto accompanied it.

Tambaram 1938

Confusion and change are fundamental features of the existing situation in the world.

The dominating social and economic order throughout the world has been organized in such a way that it is difficult for man with his fellowman to realize the Christian meaning of community where the stewardship of natural resources and the worth of each individual can be realized. This is seen in:

(a) the breaking up of the old order through the introduction of new social values in family, class, tribal and national relationships.

(b) movement toward cities, mines and industrial areas.

(c) loss of responsibility for one's neighbor.

(d) the introduction of an individual stic economy over against the communal system.

(e) the commercialization of agriculture, with its increasing dependence on an outer world economy.

(f) competitive rather than cooperative industrialization controlled by a minortiy and often involving imperialistic domination.

(g) racial and color discrimination.

(h) capitalistic exploitation, political dominance and religious prejudice limiting the utility of science or even converting it into an agent of destruction instead of beneficence to man. Deepening apprehension exists that unless the moral development of man keeps pace with scientific advance, the immense powers with which science arms men are more likely to bring about their ruin than to promote their material and moral progress.

In this new Kingdom there cannot be Greek and Jew-racial discrimination; there cannot be Barbarian or Sycthian-cultural discrimination; there cannot be bond or free-social discrimination; there cannot be male or female--sex discrimination.

We would make the unit of cooperation the human race.

All men have not the same abilities, but they should have equal opportunities.

We stand for a just distribution of the world's economic goods among the nations, and within each nation, so that every man may have enough to promote his full growth as a child of God and not too much to stifle it.

Among the causes of war we recognize the present inequality of economic opportunity open to various nations

which gives to some a privileged position in access to the world's raw materials, financial assitance and open areas which is denied to others.

Since war is a violation of human personality and repugnant to the Christian conscience, we repudiate it as a means of settling international disputes.

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APPENDIX C

TRENDS IN ASSEMBLY THEMES

Following is a summary of the outlines of assembly reports from sections reflecting the works of the Department of Church and Society. The numbers appearing to the right of each outline item indicate the treatment of similar issues in the reports of other assemblies. Progression of these reference numbers is from left to right: thus, the frequency of appearance of numbers increases as one moves in that direction across the table. Major headings carry their own number while sub-headings are designated by order of appearance. The first time a number appears it is underscored to identify the introduction of new material in the discussion of the same issue.

For example, under the outline for the Uppsala Report item II, "The Dynamics of Development" is followed by the numbers 7e, 8, 15, and 22 indicating that similar concepts related to this issue were discussed in other reports where 7e, 8, and 15 appear, while the 22 signifies that the discussion on this issue was expanded in this report. The absence of an underscored number indicates that the discussion at that point basically reflected what had previously been said. In the case of the Nairobi Report it may be assumed that new dimensions were added to the discussion of an issue unless it is indicated otherwise in the text. The absence of any number by an item indicates an isolated occurrence. This overview will be helpful in identifying some trends in social issues addressed by the World Council from 1948 to 1975.

Trends in Assembly Trends

Amsterdam: The Church and the Disorder of Society

- I. The Disorder of Society 1
- II. Economic and Political Organization 2
- III. The Responsible Society 3
- IV. Communism and Capitalism 4
- V. The Social Function of the Church 5

Evanston: Social Questions: The Responsible Society in World Perspective

- I. The Meaning of the Responsible Society 3
 - A. The structure and function of the state
 - B. Problems of Economic Life 6
 - 1. New trends 6a
 - 2. New problems 6b
 - 3. The churches' role 6c, 5
- II. The Church in Relation to Communist - Non Communist Tension 4
- III. The Problems in the Economically Underdeveloped Regions 7
 - A. Development of political institutions 7a
 - B. Land Reform and rural development 7b
 - C. Industrial development 7c
 - D. Population 7d
 - E. Independence and the responsibilities of interdependence 7e

New Delhi: Service

- I. Rapid Technological and Social Change
 - A. The fact of change 1, 6a, b, 7c, e, 8
 - B. Nature, science and technology 9, 2
 - C. Effects of technical society and the nuclear arms race on human dignity 10
- II. The Responsible Society - Freedom, Order and Power
 - A. The calling of the Christian as citizen 6, 7a

New Delhi: Service (continued)

- III. The Struggle for Racial Equality 5, 12
 - A. Methods of action 5, 13
 - B. The local congregation
 - C. Leadership in the Church 4
 - D. Separate Development
- IV. The Churches' Involvement in World Affairs and World Order 7
 - A. The deflation of suspicion 4, 7e, 14
 - B. Nationalism and new nations 7a, e, 15
 - C. International Institutions
 - D. Disarmament 16
- V. The Service of the Church in a Divided World 5, 17
 - A. In a changing and dynamic society 5
 - B. Forms of Christian Service 18
 - C. Individual responsibility and involvement 5, 19
 - D. Corporate Christian service 20
 - E. The ecumenical service of the churches 21

Uppsala: World Economic and Social Development

- I. The Christian Concern for Development 14
- II. The Dynamics of Development 7e, 8, 15, 22
- III. Political Conditions of Development 7
 - A. Developing nations 7a, b, 1. 13, 15
 - B. Developed nations 7a, e, 15
 - C. International political structures 15
 - D. Public opinion
- IV. Some Human Issues of Development 2, 7, 7e
 - A. Discrimination 12
 - B. Food and population 7d, 23
 - C. Unemployment and underemployment 1, 7c, 6c, 24
- V. The Task of Christians, Churches and the World Council of Churches 5
 - A. The challenge 3
 - B. The pastoral and educational task 5, 25
 - C. The service task 18, 20, 26
 - D. The prophetic and critical task 7e

Uppsala (continued)

- E. The political task 5, 8, 21, 27
- F. The task of the World Council of Churches 16
- G. The individual task 5, 19
- H. The new theological urgency 1, 9

Nairobi: Human Development: Ambiguities of Power, Technology, and Quality of Life

- I. New Dimensions in the Quest for Development 1, 3, 7a, b, c, d, 8, 19, 22, 23, 24, 27
- II. Social Responsibility in a Technological Age 7e, 9
 - A. Technological assessment and the criteria for "appropriate" technology 7c, 9, 24
 - B. The assessment of risks 9
 - C. Energy conservation 25
 - D. Nuclear energy 9
 - E. Alternative energy technologies
 - F. Military technology and the use of resources 16
 - G. Social consequences of the uses of modern technology on human communication 11
 - H. The allocation of common resources not yet claimed by particular nations
 - I. Agricultural technology and the food crisis 23
 - J. Ethical Problems in the transition to a sustainable and just society 7c, 25
 - K. Ethical dilemmas arising from the application of modern biology to human problems 9
 - L. The encounter of science and faith 9
- III. Towards Acknowledgment of Power 1, 2, 18
 - A. Economic power 1, 2, 8, 22
 - B. Political power 7a
 - C. Ideological power 17
 - D. Military power 14
 - E. Peoples power
 - F. Role of the Churches 1, 4, 5, 6c, 7b, 13, 17, 18, 20
- IV. Quality of Life 1, 2, 4, 6c 9

Nairobi (continued)

- V. Recommendations 5
 - A. The participation of Churches in development programs 5, 7d, 17, 18, 20, 23, 26
 - B. Social responsibility in a technological age
 - 1. Energy conservation
 - 2. Nuclear energy 9
 - 3. Alternative energy technologies
 - 4. Ethical obligations in the sustainable and just society 9
 - C. Power and Justice 1, 2, 3, 5, 7a, e, 16
 - D. Quality of Life 1, 2, 6c 7e

Appendix D

EXCERPTS FROM WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
WEEK OF MEETINGS
NOVEMBER 1-5, 1976

TOWARDS A JUST, PARTICIPATORY AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

Three Papers for the Plenary Discussion on
Wednesday, November 3, 1976

On Justice

Any approach to "Justice" starts from a particular perception of one situation as it is, realistically identifying the elements of injustice that are present, in contrast to a particular vision of what the situation ought to be. Concrete action, individually or collectively, to eliminate the unjust elements and to design the desired aims of a just situation, erases all kinds of divergences, arising from vested interests, indifference, lack of vision (utopian or not), both at individual and collective levels.

The preparation of a major World Conference on a "Just Participatory and Sustainable Society" will, in my understanding, be a major struggle--intellectual, political and behavioral--for all those involved: not only in the major question of examining the compatibility of the three aims, but mainly because of the difficult process of real perception of the world today. Preconceived, stereotyped, learned and standard modes of thinking and perceiving will get in the way.

In my view, the Conference will have to advance thinking on what I have called (1) the symmetrical versus the asymmetrical solutions to problems of injustice. The symmetrical solutions are attempts to redress an unjust situation within a fixed and unchanged basic system.

An asymmetrical solution would require political action in order to change the system in such a way that it would no longer produce the victims.

On Participation

Different perceptions about what authentic participation is, causes difficulties in thinking about this issue. Participation can be thoroughly administered as in "self-help" programmes in which people are forced to participate in building roads or drainage ditches. Highly structured "group therapy" programmes are described as participatory. Some "appropriate technology" approaches to participation define participation in terms of providing tools and techniques which are within the capacity of people with limited skills to use. Another degree of "participation" is through provision of occasions and processes where power-holders undertake to inform the people of their plans, perhaps even seek advice from the people in the form of "advisory councils," and possibly even sometimes grant concessions in response to appeals. Under these forms of participation people continue to lack power to insure change. The decisions remain with the power-holders. Full participation is achieved when people sit as equals, or have clearly delegated and instructed representatives, and structures for popular accountability. Can we be clear what we mean when we talk about "participation?"

A further question requiring clarity comes from liberal western tendencies to identify participation with political voting and voluntary association, to the neglect of economic questions such as land ownership and participation in production and distribution decisions.

On Sustainability

For 50 years the ecumenical movement has been concerned with the search for a just society. Justice involved development of new economic and social systems as well as increasing participation by people in the decision-making and community building process. Today we appear to be at a turning-point in ecumenical social thought. A new concept has emerged: sustainability.

The key assumption of our industrialized world has been continued technological progress; and with it a further assumption that the benefits of technological innovation would, almost always, outweigh the costs. Both assumptions are being radically challenged today.

The search for a sustainable society involves: a reexamination of many cherished assumptions about the "freedom" of science and technology; the formulation of new criteria for limiting that freedom; and the development of social institutions capable of exercising the necessary control.

Appendix E

OUTLINE OF ISSUES FROM THE CONSULTATION ON
HUMANITY, NATURE AND GOD
ZURICH, JULY 11-16-1977

- I. Introduction
 - A. False or Incomplete Responses to the Ecological Predicament
 - 1. The "Science will handle it" answer
 - 2. The "Return to nature" answer
 - 3. The "God will provide" answer
 - 4. The "I'm alright Jack" answer
 - 5. The "Life-boat ethics" answer
 - 6. The "Triage" answer
 - 7. The "Scapegoat" answer
 - 8. The "Doomsday" answer
 - 9. The "We'll cross the bridge when we come to it" answer
 - B. False or Incomplete Views of Nature and Humanity
 - 1. The "pragmatic view"
 - 2. The "mechanistic view"
 - 3. The "compartment view"
 - C. The Integral View of Nature in the Bible
- II. Underlying Conceptual Issues
 - A. Instrumental Value and Intrinsic Value
 - B. God's Creativity is Love--the Viewpoint of Process Theology
 - C. Humanity, Nature and God--Three Realities or One
 - D. History, Nature and Grace
- III. The Biblical Interpretation of Nature
 - A. Nature
 - B. Human Nature
 - C. The Cosmic Christ and Cosmic Salvation
 - D. Eschatology and Futurology
- IV. The Contributions of African and Asian Cultures
- V. Towards a New Vision of the Relation of Humanity, Nature and God
 - A. Elements of a New Vision
 - 1. Science and nature
 - 2. Theology and nature

3. Humanity and nature
 4. God and nature
 5. Conflict, suffering and evil
 6. Hope
- B. Vision and Praxis

Appendix F

REPORTING FROM JPSS DRAFTING GROUP

Embargo against discussion
in plenary

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Central Committee
Geneva - Switzerland
July 28 - August 6, 1977

Document No. 44

Following a recommendation by the Executive Committee (see CC Document No. 25), the Committees of the Program Unit were asked to discuss further the draft-prospectus (CC document No. 24) and to nominate two of their members to serve on a joint drafting group "with the task of preparing a report and recommendation for action by the Central Committee." Dr. Simatuparg was appointed as moderator of the drafting group. The drafting group heard reports from the Unit discussions and submits the following recommendations.

1. Why a JPSS program emphasis?

- (1) To provide an arena where emerging insights into a new world society can be viewed in an integrated and comprehensive manner. The JPSS program emphasis will be a forum in which the insights gathered from local, national and regional (as well as global) experiences and studies can be examined. And it will be an instrument for seeking to identify lessons from these experiences and making them available to the churches.
- (2) To assist the churches, and the WCC, to move toward a more comprehensive and coherent picture of the kind of society towards which Christians should be struggling. Theological and ethical reflection should be a major and integral part of this effort.
- (3) Within the WCC, to provide an overall framework and rationale for study and action. Three practical consequences should result:
 - (a) In view of limited WCC resources of money, energy and to assure public credibility, determination could be made about what proposed efforts are central to our concerns and what are marginal.

- (b) Individual studies and programs could have more specific focus because it would be an accepted fact that, given the interconnectedness of all issues, no individual program would have to reflect the total picture.
- (c) This program emphasis would help to shape the character of the whole WCC effort towards a JPSS and to identify possible gaps in the total effort.
- (4) To move from the present stance of critique (implicit) of social ideologies toward a more positive indication of what Christians and churches can struggle for (without confusing that with the Kingdom).

2. How would this program emphasis be realized?

An advisory committee on the JPSS theme might be formed, consisting of 12 members, drawn from the Central Committee, from all Program units and from selected Sub-units.

3. What should be the functions of such an advisory committee?

- (1) To offer advice on program plans of Units and Sub-Units in order that ways by which their contributions to a coordinated concern for JPSS might be strengthened. This would pertain to existing efforts as well as to the development of possible new efforts considered to be important.
- (2) To discover appropriate ways to catalyze theological and ethical reflection on the JPSS program emphasis, to include such topics as the following:
 - (a) theological and ethical perspectives that should inform and inspire the shaping of the JPSS, including political, economic and cultural aspects,
 - (b) theological bases of Christian "realism" and Christian "utopianism" in the struggle for social betterment, with attention to both long-term vision and transitional strategies,
 - (c) Christian understanding of the significance of principalities and powers in the struggle for a new society,

- (d) Christian perspectives on creation, nature and history in relation to concerns for ecology and finite resources,
 - (e) theological and ideological debates about science and technology,
 - (f) Christian understanding of the nature and significance of dialogue with persons of other faiths and ideologies in the struggle toward a new global society.
- (3) To oversee the preparation of a 25-30 page working statement on the substantive ideas which would "define" the JPSS, assuring that the process for developing this statement included ways to reflect the experiences and perspectives of Christian groups at the local and national, as well as at the regional and global levels.

This framework document, designed to provide an integrating focus for ongoing discussions, should contain at least the following elements:

- (a) How the JPSS concern and emphasis relates to the other three priorities established by the Nairobi Assembly
 - (1. expression and communication of our faith;
 - 2. unity of the church and the unity of mankind; 3. education and renewal in the search for true community.)
- (b) Identification of the major lines of the socio-historical context in which the JPSS is being shaped
- (c) Theological and ethical affirmations which shape the emerging JPSS vision
- (d) An elaboration of the main political and economic aspects of the JPSS
- (e) Concrete ways in which the churches today, in their thought and practice, are implicated in the perpetuation of the status quo in society, and concrete ways in which some Christians and churches are witnessing practically to a JPSS vision

- (f) Lessons learned in the struggle so far. Are there some new "middle axioms" which can provide the basis for a new consensus?
- (g) Continuing areas of tension and questioning in our thought and action as we struggle together.

4. Recommendation

We urge that, in accordance with the above rationale, and with action recommended by the Executive Committee in February 1977, an Advisory Committee on a "Just Participatory and Sustainable Society" be formed.

5. Some considerations for implementation

- (1) The drafting committee concluded that, in the absence of any compelling alternative which we could think of, and in view of the fact that this is a program emphasis rather than a new program, we should keep JPSS as the title for the present.
- (2) Minimum funding will have to be found to underwrite the convening two meetings of the Advisory Committee, and the preparation and publication of the JPSS Statement.
- (3) The Advisory Committee would meet twice, possibly three times, prior to the next meeting of the Central Committee.
- (4) The Advisory Committee may wish to include in its deliberations a limited number of communicators and other independent experts to assist in its work, especially in reference to the development of the JPSS statement.
- (5) The experience and value of the Advisory Committee should be reviewed at the next meeting of the Central Committee to determine whether it should be continued, modified, or ended.
- (6) Several concerns have been expressed about the contents of Document 24 ("The Search for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society"). Some major comments on the text are appended. Additional comments are solicited for the Advisory Committee.

Some questions and Observations about the JPSS Text

1. How does the JPSS emphasis relate to the other three program priorities stemming from the Nairobi Assembly?
2. Can the "tone" of the document be made less optimistic, without sliding too far in the direction of pessimism and defeatism?
3. There is a danger of assuming that all churches exist in the same kind of situation. There should be more concreteness in this respect.
4. There should be more theological grounding in the statement.
5. In the current text the analysis is somewhat falsified by an apparent assumption that justice, participation and sustainability are equal and mutually compatible. There is some tension between them at least on the surface.
6. It seems to be argued that there is a neat correlation between justice and socio-economic issues, between participation and political and institutional concerns, and between sustainability and scientific and technological questions. This parallel positioning is too simplistic, although perhaps suggestive.
7. There is danger of escapism in one of two directions: (1) into details which hide the essential generalities; (2) into generalities which obscure concrete details and falsifying analysis.
8. We need to reflect much more the socio-historical context out of which the present situation grew. Otherwise, we will distort the analysis of why we are in the present situation, and how we can get out of it.
9. How should the text take account of the fact that the churches are not the only group(s) concerned for a new society? How should we relate to these others? And what is the distinctive or particular place of the churches in the struggle?
10. We must guarantee that the text does not reflect a Geneva-to-the-world analysis or tone, and that whatever develops is a serious effort to take account of the concerns, experiences and analyses which stem from local groups across the world.

11. We must be careful to be concrete for the churches, and not to simply speak to the world. This means that the statement must be specific about the churches as obstacles to the new society, as well as potential contributors to its realization.
12. Some proposed titles received from Central Committee members were the following:

Survival, Freedom, Compassion

Churches and the Future of Society

Churches and Our Technological Future

Faith and Science in Shaping our Future

Towards a Responsible World Society

Towards a Globally Responsible Society

The Coming Kingdom and the Power of the Enemy

Justice, Participation and Survival

Human Responsibility for One World

Doing Justly, Deciding Together, and Developing
the Earth

Toward a Just, Shared and Sustained Society

Appendix G

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE FIRST MEETING OF
THE JPSS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 11-14, 1977
GENEVA

Prof. Jose Miguez-Bonino (Moderator)	Argentina
Rev. Prof. Vitaly Borovoy	USSR
Miss Janice Love	USA
Rt. Rev. Dr. Henry Okullu	Kenya
Dr. Koson Srisang	USA
Prof. Andre Dumas	France
Prof. Masao Takenaka	Japan
Prof. Richard Dickinson (Consultant)	USA
Bishop Dr. Karoly Toth	Hungary
Prof. Kim Yong Bok (Consultant)	Japan
Mr. Nicholas Maro (Consultant)	Tanzania
Dr. Jan Pronk (Consultant)	Netherlands
Dr. Jørgen Randers (Consultant)	Norway

W.C.C. Staff

Dr. Philip Potter	Dr. Konrad Raiser	Dr. Paul Abrecht
Mr. Jean Fischer	Mr. D. de Gaspar	Mr. C. I. Itty
Mr. Ninan Koshy	Mr. George Todd	Miss R. Green
Fr. John Lucal and Rev. T. Tschuy (Sodepax)		

Appendix H

DISCUSSION GROUP ON PROGRAMME AREAS OF CONCENTRATION
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JPSS,
PROGRAMME STAFF MEETING, 12 MARCH 1979 --
ROUGH SUMMARY NOTES

Challenge from the General Secretary

How do we communicate the central or overarching concerns of JPSS in the light of the historic communication problems of the WCC, in view of the proliferation of programmes in recent years, and in view of the recent debate at CC?

Some balancing or conflicting opinions on JPSS:

1. The document
 - a. It is preliminary and incomplete, needs time to work out, contains sweeping generalizations, lacks theological grounding and clarity.
 - b. The problem is not clarity; the division is due to real differences on language, presuppositions, and commitments; what is needed is not consensus but greater confrontation to get at the crux of the issues and have real dialogue.
 - c. The problem is the lack of clarity, which produces confusion, which is used against the document.
 - d. It appears to be a gathering of opinions by a committee, not a clear call to or expression of commitment.
2. The process
 - a. The process has been inadequate due to the make-up of the working group, the lack of time or ability to deal with the various dimensions of JPSS, the way their work was presented.
 - b. The problem is not the process but the vision; it is not realistic to pretend to achieve a JPSS.

- c. The problem is one of communication, not however with the document or the way it was presented; it wrong to attempt this through a document.
 - (1) Note that the other programme thrusts have not produced a document--perhaps should not.
 - (2) No one can doubt the WCC commitment to the 3 areas: Justice, Participation, and Sustainability.

3. Communication

- a. There has been a lack of coordination and communication in the house, especially between Church and Society and the working group; they did not bring out adequately their differences.
- b. The WCC attempts to speak for the churches, especially the grassroots, i.e., the people in their struggles. This can be interpreted as opposition to the hierarchies and occasion their opposition to the WCC. Grassroots groups can question WCC's right to speak for them, yet they need and want this global articulation of their concerns.

4. Opinions as to JPSS's problems

- a. The 3 basic concepts are accepted, but the problem is how to hold them together theologically.
- b. People no longer want to discuss ideas but to see working models of a new society.
- c. There is a need to articulate more concretely what the new society might look like. It is difficult to communicate the concepts, if we can't describe this society.
- d. In some constituencies the problem is rather the over-identification of the WCC with the socialist model.
- e. The problem lies in the differences between 2 constituencies, the practitioners/activists and the theologians, each side unhappy with the other's formulation of JPSS, and the document contains elements of both.

- f. The problem lies in the unfamiliarity of sustainability and participation as theological concepts. There has not been time to articulate them.
- g. No. we should not wait for the theological language or consensus to emerge but rather take the political option first, or in dialogue with theology.

Some possible recommendations

- 1. Bring out clearly the differences and the convergences as we now see them in order to heighten the debate.
- 2. Have more inter-unit communication on the 4 programme emphasis.
- 3. Clarify the WCC's role in expressing the struggles of people, not down to them or for them but with them. The WCC should appear more as an enabler and less as a think-tank.
- 4. Carry on the biblical-theological debate concerning the bases for JPSS.
- 5. Continue to bring together the practitioners and the thinkers, innovators and censors, local experiences and global perspectives.
- 6. Look for concrete expressions and content of justice, participation, and sustainability. They are still vague, empty concepts.

Points arising in the plenary discussions:

- 1. We must agree that the dichotomy of thinking and action is false, but many in the churches perceive the problem in these terms.
- 2. The problem of communication is not just ours; the churches have the same problem.
- 3. There are differences in understanding and acceptance of action/reflection methodology. Some say they don't see the basis of faith.
- 4. We must be careful not to over-emphasize JPSS at the expense of the other 3 programme emphases.

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5. The JPSS issues are what divide us in the churches and in the WCC. The challenge is to deal with this division and to find our way through this problem of communication. We have dealt with them in assemblies, but we need to help the churches work out how they will do so.
6. The problem of JPSS is that it has not yet become divisive, explicit enough, except PCR. We should give more direct expressions in the name of the WCC. Human rights, TNC, PCR, militarism, etc., are divisive matters.
7. In the example of Mozambique, the WCC played a role in liberation, but as scientific socialism emerges, the churches are not able to relate to it. The WCC has failed to develop a global response to the new situation.

/s/ R. Kinsler

R. Kinsler

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